Capital RESIDENCE

BOMB IRAN

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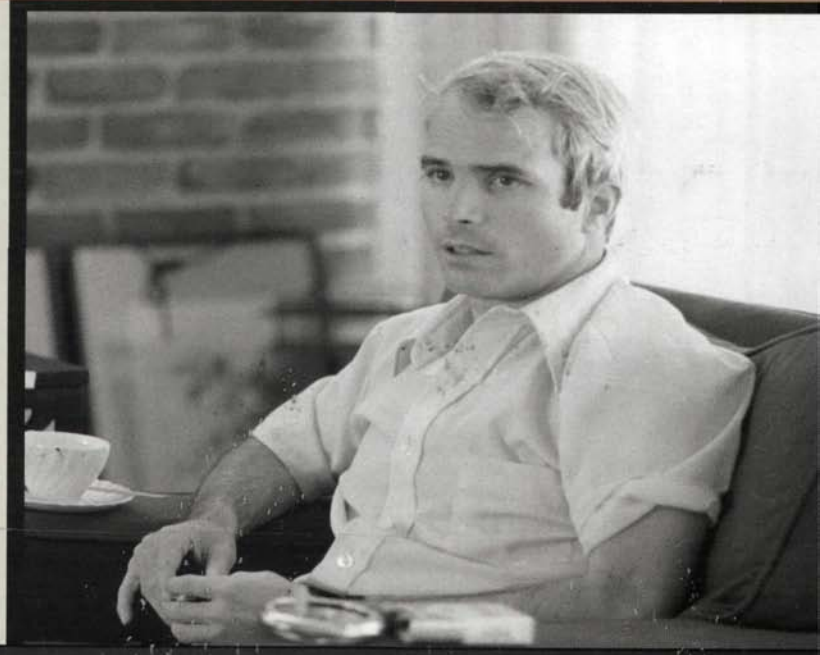
STRAIGHT TALK (ON FOREIGN POLICY)

||| TO RUSSIA WITH LOVE ||| TRY A CENTURY

JOHN McCAIN



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Plus: An Excerpt From *Mexico Way*, the new nov by Chilton Williamson, J

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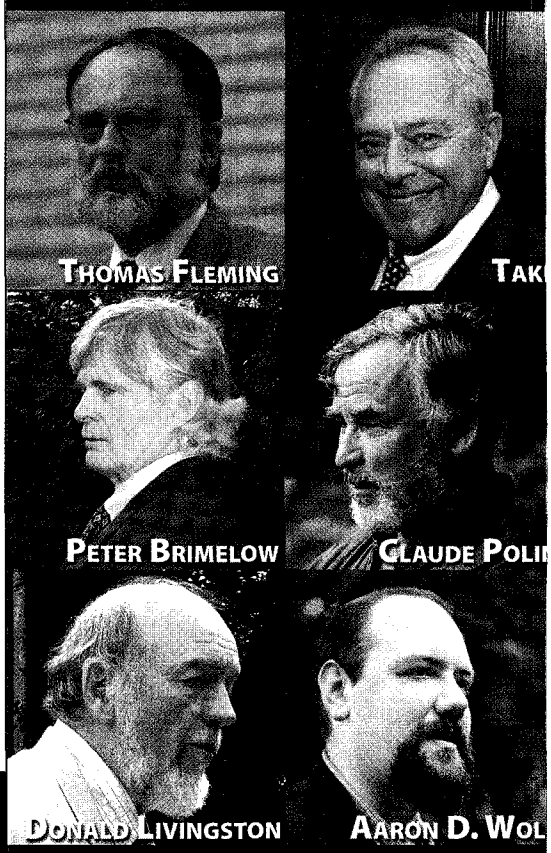

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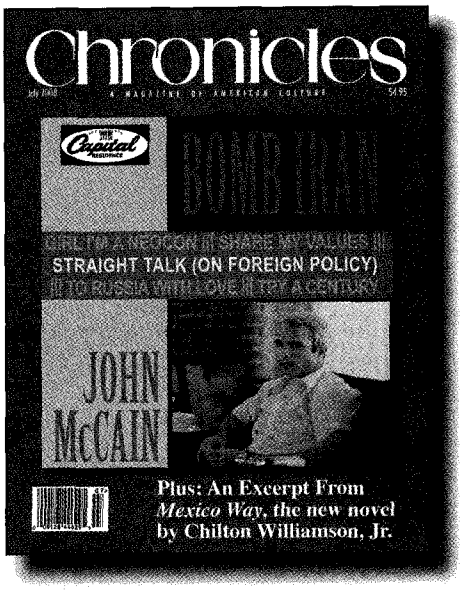
A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE



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POLEMICS & EXCHANGES

On Christmas in July

The June issue of *Chronicles* ("Surviving the Global Economy") was simply outstanding. This is really saying a lot, since every issue is superb. I especially liked Jack Trotter's article on the Abbeville, South Carolina, Christmas celebration ("Christmas in Abbeville," *Correspondence*). While certain elements of our society feel compelled to demand hatred and shame for their history among those of white, European descent, the city mayor and commissioners of Abbeville are in complete and enthusiastic support of an event that celebrates the area's past. The article was quite inspiring and gave me a rare experience: hope for the future. I have made plans to attend the event this coming season.

—Monte Poitevint
Lakeland, Georgia

On Constant Innovation

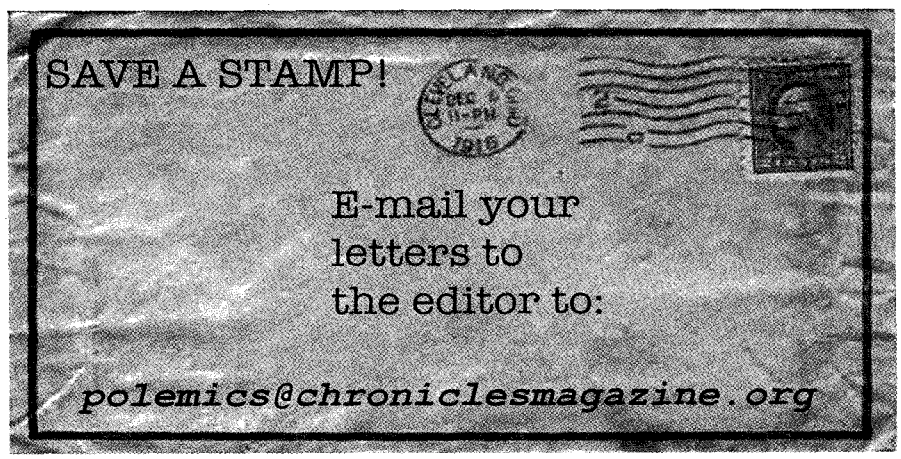
I enjoyed Clark Stooksbury's critical review of Jeff Gomez's book *Print Is Dead: Books in Our Digital Age* ("Print Lives!," May). But there is a deeper problem revealed in Gomez's book that he did not discuss: Technophiles such as Gomez are essentially revolutionaries. They believe that constant change is necessary and inevitable. They believe the future will be better than the past. Most importantly, they desire the total destruction of the old (in Gomez's case, the book) and its replacement with the new.

This process of constant innovation and change is the very essence of the industrial system. Industry has provided many social benefits, but it also carries many costs—environmental, health, emotional, *etc.* But the greatest cost is spiritual. To date, there is no case of a society becoming more religious after industrializing. Industrialization has been the engine of secularization the world over. The reason is that simple industry and industrial products alter, even sever, human relationships with life itself. God's Creation is replaced by man's creation. Does it have to be this way? Not necessarily.

The Roman Catholic theologian and physicist Fr. Stanley Jaki once said that one of the greatest imperatives for Christians today is to demythologize science (and, by extension, its byproduct, technology). Technology is a tool, not an object of worship or instrument of revolution. The real question concerns not the power and efficiency of these tools, but whether they enhance our culture and civilization. Do they create stronger families and communities? Do they bring us closer to truth, beauty, and goodness? Do they bring us closer to God and nature? If not, get rid of them.

And with respect to books, it may be possible to fit 500 volumes onto a single wireless gadget. It may be cheap, portable, and easy to use. But what looks better on your shelf?

—Tobias Lanz
Columbia, SC



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by Thomas Fleming

Texas: Exes and Sexes

When Texas Child Protective Services seized the children of mothers belonging to the Fundamentalist Church of Latter Day Saints, I wondered if the Independent Republic was turning Yankee. The seizure was an abuse of power against the fundamental institution of all human societies—the family. Fortunately, the ruling on May 23 by the state's Third Circuit Court of Appeals (confirmed by the Texas Supreme Court on May 29), which condemned the action as illegal, restores my faith in the sanity of Texans.

Naturally, the feminist child-savers at the TCPS are appalled by the ruling, but what did they expect? Their case rested on the allegation that on the FLDS ranch there was a pervasive atmosphere of abuse of children and minors, which entitled them to seize all the children without proving in any one case that a particular child had been abused or even was in imminent danger of abuse. The smoking gun in the case was a telephone call from a girl who claimed to have been abused. When she turned out to be a middle-aged ex-member with a grudge, the case should have fallen apart, but like our Texan President, who kept on changing his excuse for invading Iraq, the prosecutors moved on to other allegations.

I do not know why such a strange religion as Mormonism was ever tolerated outside of Utah, but I do not make the laws. Mormonism is legal, and so is Fundamentalist Mormonism. However repulsive we may find polygamy or marriage with young teenage women, let us remember that the Fundamentalist Mormons are hardly much different from polygamous Mormons down to 1890, when under very serious pressure from the federal government, the LDS renounced—for the time being—polygamy. I have read remarks from so-called Christian conservatives who compare polygamy with homosexuality. Where did such people go to school? King David was on a moral plane with homosexuals?

In America today, I do not see that there is any basis for outlawing polygamy. It certainly cannot be Christian moral law: Christianity can scarcely be mentioned in a public school or government building, and there is hardly any aspect of Christian morality that is enforced by law, even if there are still statutes on the books that retain the impress of the Christians who passed the law. When is the last time that adultery or fornication was punished as such? Prostitution is illegal in most places—with what justification I cannot imagine—but two consenting adults can do pretty much anything in the privacy of one of their homes. Military officers are occasionally punished for adultery, usually with someone under their command or at least in the same service, but that is a question of military discipline. A Michigan court has ruled that the penalty for adultery could be a life sentence, but I know of no one in Michigan serving time for seducing his neighbor's wife. After *Lawrence* v. *Texas* (2003), adultery became a dead letter. If adultery is not a crime, how can polygamy be punished? A bigamist who lies to his wives is one thing; he may well be regarded as having tricked his second wife into a contractual relationship. But a man who lives openly with two women has, in the eyes of American law today, committed no crime.

Critics of the FLDS also claim to be shocked by the marriage of underage girls with men in their 20's and 30's, but if they knew anything about the marriage customs of other ages, they would hardly be surprised. In colonial Virginia, parental consent was necessary for a minor to get married, but with consent a girl of 12 could become a bride. Even in America today, while marriage laws vary from state to state, it is simply not true to say that it is illegal for a girl of 16 to get married. In Pennsylvania, girls and boys under 18 need parental consent and have to pay a fee, while minors under the age of 16 need the consent both of the parents and of a judge of the orphans court. In Utah, parental consent and permission from the juvenile court is required. In Texas, where the alleged abuse took place, parental consent on an official form or an order from the district court is sufficient. All this noise about the marriage of 16-year-old girls is a complete canard.

State governments routinely promote teenage promiscuous sex in the sex-education programs in government schools and in government-funded counseling centers. Condoms are routinely provided to children on the pretext of preventing the spread of STDs, when everyone knows that the purpose is to encourage teenage sex. And yet, here we have a state agency seizing a large group of children on the grounds that teenage girls are having sex with a man they regard as their husband and to whom they have promised fidelity.

A recent *Chicago Tribune* featured an article entitled "To many girls, sex with adults just part of life," in which Mary Schmich interviews many young Chicago girls who openly talk about their sexual relations with older men. The young women she interviewed were mostly from the lower strata of society, but our entire culture, from top to bottom, is saturated with images of sexuality and promiscuity. From a little girl's first Barbie to the social pressure to engage in sex games in middle school to TV shows, such as *Desperate Housewives*, designed to justify and promote adultery, American women are given a consistent message: Do it!

America, as a society, is dedicated to the sexual exploitation of women. The only "crime" committed by the Fundamentalist Mormons is their commitment to marriage. ©

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OLMERT'S TROUBLES

Israel's Prime Minister Ehud Olmert has been in trouble many times in the course of his long and colorful political career.

As mayor of Jerusalem, he was suspected of accepting bribes in the "Greek-island affair" involving former premier Ariel Sharon and his son, Omri (who was eventually convicted and jailed for seven months); but the case against Olmert was closed in 2004 without charges. In 2006, an inquiry was opened on the 1999 sale and lease-back of Olmert's house in Jerusalem, which allegedly netted him some $330,000, leading to a criminal investigation a year later. In January 2007, he was the subject of another inconclusive criminal investigation over accusations that, as finance minister in late 2005, he tried to help a close personal associate buy the state-owned Bank Leumi. Last year, his political opponents accused him of improper business dealings and conflict of interest during his tenure as minister of trade and industry.

In all those cases, however, no smoking gun was revealed, leading Olmert to conclude somewhat smugly that he was "indestructible."

The latest investigation involving Olmert is different. It was opened in early May not in response to media reports or investigations by the state comptroller but as a result of information revealed during earlier probes. According to an Israeli-police statement, "The investigation deals with suspicions that the prime minister received significant sums of money from a foreigner or number of foreign individuals over an extended period of time." A police spokesman named American-Jewish businessman Morris Talansky as a key witness, along with Olmert's long-time secretary, Shula Zaken, and his former law partner, Uri Messer. Investigators are said to have cracked coded notes kept by Zaken of sums given by Talansky, to whom she referred in her notes as "The Laundry Man."

Olmert denies any wrongdoing and says that he will resign only if indicted. "I look each and every one of you in the eye and say, I never took bribes," he declared in a televised address on May 8. "I never took a penny for myself." He said all the cash he received was legitimate support from Talansky to fund various election bids, including two successful campaigns for mayor of Jerusalem in 1993 and 1998, a failed candidacy for the Likud leadership in 1999, and a further internal Likud election in 2002. He also said Talansky "helped me cover deficits" after elections.

Talansky's Israeli-court testimony on May 27 presented a darker picture, however. Talansky said he had handed over about $150,000 of his own money to Olmert, directly and through aides, over a 15-year period, and additional sums from fundraising. He did not know how the money had been spent: "I only know he loved expensive cigars. I know he loved pens, watches." According to Talansky, on one occasion Olmert also asked him for a personal loan of $25,000 for a holiday in Italy. On another, he walked to a bank to withdraw $15,000 in cash for a loan as Olmert waited in a nearby New York hotel; neither loan has been repaid. Talansky also covered some of Olmert's expenses during speaking tours of the United States, above what Olmert received from the institutions hosting him. In the final years of their relationship, according to Talansky, he brought Olmert ten envelopes stuffed with cash in New York and gave a number of additional envelopes to his secretary.

After Talansky's testimony, Olmert came under pressure to go. Former prime minister Ehud Barak was the first government minister serving in Olmert's coalition to call for his resignation. "Considering the challenges Israel faces, including Hamas, Hizbullah, Syria, Iran, the captured soldiers and the peace process, the prime minister cannot simultaneously lead the government and conduct his personal affairs," Barak, who holds the crucial defense portfolio, told a press conference in the Knesset. Another minister belonging to Labor, Binyamin Ben-Eliezer, called upon Olmert's centrist Kadima Party to do some soul searching and make "difficult decisions," because "an Israeli prime minister must be completely available to deal with the country's problems and not other matters."

Similar calls have come from within Kadima, with Knesset member Amir Dotan urging Olmert to demonstrate "personal leadership" by quitting. Her colleague Ze'ev Elkin declared that "the prime minister must resign . . . Israel cannot allow such a situation to go on." Even Olmert's staunch loyalists, such as Kadima deputy Yoel Hasson, have said that Olmert should "carefully consider his position in light of the circumstances."

Regardless of Olmert's eventual fate, the loser in the affair is the flagging "peace process" with the Palestinians; but that process was not going anywhere anyway. More interestingly, the announcement that Israel is now engaged in negotiations with Syria may be indicative of Olmert's desire to divert attention from his legal troubles and to earn some brownie points with the "doves." There is a precedent for such a strategy: In the summer of 2005, Ariel Sharon suddenly and unilaterally evacuated Gaza, thus drawing attention away from his own role in the Greek-island affair.

A year ago I talked at some length with a man who knows Olmert well, his advisor on Christian affairs during the second of his two terms as mayor of Jerusalem (1993-2003). Shmuel Evyatar says that his old boss cannot imagine himself as a *former* politician: "To him, political power is everything, an end in itself, the purpose of his very existence; he is a politician with a big P."

The syndrome sounds familiar, especially after the Democratic primaries, and the prediction is easy to make:

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Olmert may "consider his position," but he will not go short of an indictment, and even then he will continue to protest his innocence, regardless of the evidence or of the eventual verdict. A Politician, indeed.

—*Srdja Trifkovic*

ARE WE ROLLING DOWNHILL . . .

Republican partisans' joy at an estimated 0.6-percent increase in U.S. Gross Domestic Product in the first quarter of 2008 has been diminished by the continued contraction of two key economic indicators used to determine whether a recession has started. These are non-farm payroll employment (compiled by the Bureau of Labor Statistics), which peaked in December 2007; and industrial production (tracked by the Federal Reserve), which has declined since January 2008. Payroll employment is the broadest economic indicator, and industrial production measures the physical output of the nation's factories, mines, and utilities. Martin Feldstein, chairman of President Reagan's Council of Economic Advisors, referred to both indicators in a *Financial Times* column (May 7) arguing that a recession started around the first of the year. Feldstein's opinion matters more than those of others practicing the dismal science because he is a member of the National Bureau of Economic Research's Business Cycle Dating Committee—a seven-person academic panel that analyzes turning points in the economy. The NBER, founded in 1920, is a Cambridge-based nonprofit, nonpartisan research group. The committee is considered a neutral arbiter, or umpire, within the profession, and any ruling it makes will be widely cited by the media.

Feldstein characterizes the GDP report touted by Republicans as "very misleading," because it implies that economic activity was on the rise in the first quarter of 2008. The increase, Feldstein noted, "actually refers to the rise from the average level in the fourth quarter of 2007 to the average level in the first quarter. Monthly data since January indicate that economic activity and GDP have been declining since the start of this year." Harvard economist Jeffrey Frankel, another umpire, made a similar argument on his weblog on May 12 in a post entitled, "White House Confidence that US is Not in Recession is Misplaced." Frankel argues the employment numbers provide "the most important information" about the economy's status.

One fact not cited by either umpire buttresses their arguments: Job creation has peaked in industry supersectors that account for more than 50 percent of total U.S. employment. One sector, manufacturing, has contracted since March 1998, a fact well known to *Chronicles* readers. The construction (September 2006) and financial-services (December 2006) peaks reflect the now-burst housing bubble. Trade, transportation, and utilities, now nearly twice the size of manufacturing, peaked (November 2007) with U.S. private employment, as a weak dollar and higher energy costs have contributed to losses in the sector. A key industrial-production sector—durable consumer goods, which includes automotive—peaked (October 2005) earlier than the overall index. These data suggest a recession is under way, although it is too soon to determine its duration. The shortest postwar recession (January to June 1980) lasted only six months, while the longest (November 1973 to March 1975, and July 1981 to November 1982) were each 16 months. If this recession tracks the postwar average (ten months), a new expansion should start later this year.

Popular media frequently define recession as two consecutive quarters of negative GDP. The NBER panel relies on more indicators, defining recession as "a significant decline in economic activity spread across the economy, lasting more than a few months, normally visible in real GDP, real income, employment, industrial production, and wholesale-retail sales." These competing definitions, which must seem arcane to laymen, have significant implications in a presidential-election year. Republicans are likely to cite the first definition if GDP expands at modest rates or alternates between expansion and contraction on a quarter-to-quarter basis. A positive first-quarter GDP number followed by negative second-quarter and positive third-quarter readings (or *vice versa*) would muddle the picture until final revised numbers are available—after November. Prepare for Democrats, who will cite academic proponents of the second definition, to note that GDP has not always declined for two consecutive quarters in recessions identified in the NBER's business-cycle chronology, which dates to 1854. It shows recessions occurred from April 1960 to February 1961, and from March to November 2001. In 1960, GDP contracted in the second and fourth quarters but expanded in the third. During the last (2001) recession, GDP recorded a similar pattern, contracting in the third quarter of 2000, and in the first and third quarters of 2001, yet expanding in the second and fourth quarters of 2001, according to the Bureau of Economic Analysis. Expect Democrats to cite every negative monthly employment report and to argue against the popular media myth that the Fed prevents recessions in presidential election years. The chronology shows recessions in 1960 and 1980 but not, contrary to the claims of Bill Clinton, in 1992. Democrats retain an advantage in one other sense. Any decision by the NBER panel about the trough (conclusion) of any recession is not likely to be reached before November 2008. The state of the U.S. economy may not be the crucial issue deciding the 2008 election, but voters are likely to hear all of these arguments in the coming months.

—*Greg Kaza*

MARK ROYDEN WINCHELL, R.I.P.

Mark Winchell, literary scholar, biographer, essayist, and occasional contributor to *Chronicles*, passed from this realm in May after a brave two-year battle with cancer. With four books out in just the last two years and at barely 60 years of age, Mark was just

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coming into the prime of his productive career. His official title, professor of literature and European civilization at Clemson University, does not begin to cover his accomplishments: a half-dozen literary biographies, including studies of Cleanth Brooks, Donald Davidson (completing a project begun by M.E. Bradford), and one just published on Robert Penn Warren; dozens of articles in scholarly and popular journals on just about every significant American writer of the 20th and 19th centuries and many other subjects; coauthorship of the memoirs of Sen. Herman Tallmadge; the founding of the *South Carolina Review*; serving as director of The League of the South Institute for the Study of Southern History and Culture.

A native of Ohio, Dr. Winchell came to Vanderbilt to study with the second (and last) generation of Southern Agrarians in its English department. His primary interest was in Southern literature, though he wrote with liveliness and insight on a wide variety of other subjects. George Garrett described Winchell's recent book of literary essays, *Reinventing the South*, as "high intelligence joining wit, good humor, and common sense," and "free of contemporary critical jargon and easily accessible to the good and serious reader." Besides that book and the just-published one on Robert Penn Warren, Mark published two others in recent months: *God, Man, and Hollywood: Politically Incorrect Cinema From The Birth of a Nation to The Passion of the Christ*, and an admirably old-fashioned and solid freshman composition reader, *Ideas in Conflict: Writing About the Great Ideas of Civilization*, edited with his wife, Prof. Donna H. Winchell.

Mark's combat with cancer and its grueling treatments was the bravest I have ever witnessed, a model of Christian courage and spirit which I hope I can imitate if I am ever in the position to need to. He remained upbeat, dedicated to his wife and two still-young sons, and highly productive through the two years of illness and doubt. Beyond that, Mark Winchell had another rare kind of courage: intellectual courage. He was fearless in standing by his convictions, which nearly always ran against academic fashion. One has to have spent some time inside the academy in recent years to understand the courage that Mark always displayed. A few years ago, there were, among all the professors at our two major South Carolina universities, just three who were willing to sign a reasoned scholarly statement defending the flying of a Confederate flag at the state capitol. They were—besides Yours Truly—Prof. Marie (Mrs. Donald) Livingston (a native of Massachusetts), and Mark Winchell.

I remember once mentioning to him the latest outrage perpetrated by the Southern Poverty Law Center (a Stalinist group that specializes in "reporting" to the police and the media that everyone to its right is a hater and fascist). The SPLC had put out a major "expose'" of what it calls the "Neo-Confederates," including several persons well known to *Chronicles* readers. I told Mark that he was one among our friends who had not been included in the slander. "I'll just have to try harder," he said.

—*Clyde Wilson*

RUTH M. BESEMER, R.I.P.

Ruth Miller Besemer of Boulder, Colorado, and I exchanged letters for several months before we met. She sent the first in 1999, when The Rockford Institute held the annual meeting of the John Randolph Club in Georgetown. The Saturday-evening debate topic was: "Resolved: Conservatives in D.C. haven't done a damn thing." To a check for $250 to support the event, she attached a brief note: "You're damn right they haven't!"

On May 5 the quiet, lovely lady who had become known to the staff of The Rockford Institute and to their families as "Aunt Ruth" died. She was 94 years old. For the better part of a decade she served on the Institute's board of directors, and when the history of *Chronicles* is written, the record will show that her quiet and superabundant generosity kept our lights on and the presses running.

A Long Island native, Ruth, as a young woman, had worked as a bookkeeper and a librarian before landing a job at HarperCollins. When she joined our board she said to me, "Tell George Garrett that I knew Henry Hoyns. He didn't have much of a sense of humor. He scolded my girlfriends and me for a harmless office prank." Ruth never mentioned just how harmless.

Sometime in the 70's, she and her husband, Arthur, moved to Denver, where he and his brother had operated an ammunition factory during the war. When the Besemers began their retirement, the Rockies called them back. Before long, they were in a ranch set into the side of a hill in the rural outskirts of Boulder, looking each day across the basin at Ruth's beloved Flatirons, and at the snow-capped Long's Peak—one of the Centennial State's "14ers," as Ruth liked to explain. When Arthur died, she moved into Boulder, to an apartment in a beautifully restored property that had once been a girls' school, and with no less of a view.

On my visits to Boulder, Ruth and I would take drives in the mountains of Estes State Park and end the day with dinner at her favorite restaurant, John's on Pearl Street. Ruth loved Boulder, but she had no illusions about the oddballs who are drawn to the place. Whenever we would encounter a Boulderite walking his dog along the Boulder Creek path, Ruth would remind me, "We have no pet owners here, only 'pet guardians'!"

Only in her last three years did Ruth slow down. Before she stowed her small green suitcase for the final time, she had joined us for several meetings of the John Randolph Club, Summer Schools, and four overseas Convivia: Lombardy, Tuscany, Rome, and Paris. At every event you could find Ruth among the pipe smokers. "I smoked a pipe during the war because we couldn't get cigarettes." When my children would bring home puritan propaganda about the life-shortening effects of smoking, I would say, "Apparently Aunt Ruth hasn't heard."

Ruth's only child, Donald, worked

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for the Forest Service and lost his life as a young man in an accident in the line of duty. In her last years, the staff of the Institute became her family. Chilton and Maureen Williamson made frequent visits to her in Boulder. When Ruth was through Chicago, Srdja and Mirjana Trifkovic took her to the opera. When Ruth fell ill with infection in Paris, Jan Kooistra tended her at bedside. She was dear to all of us and very dear to Jackie and me and our boys.

She joined us for Thanksgiving and Christmas, ever ready to raise a glass or two of Scotch before dinner. "Never refuse a drink, Arthur would say," she was fond of repeating each time her glass was charged.

Five years ago, Ruth joined the Checks in the High Southwest for a vacation. On the day she was to fly from Durango back to Boulder, we took the narrow gauge rail up to Silverton, planning to take the bus back to Durango in plenty of time for her late-afternoon flight. In Silverton we learned that an avalanche had blocked the road and that we would have to take the train back. Knowing that the train would not arrive in time for her flight, Ruth and I asked the conductor his advice. On the return, he graciously stopped the train at an intersection south of the block, and the good people of the Durango and Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad met us with a car. Ruth made her plane with just minutes to spare, but through none of it did I sense the least concern or apprehension.

Indeed, she was impossible to fluster. When, on one occasion, she did miss not one but two flights in the same trip, causing us to be separated *en route* to Florence, she bided her time for 12 hours in the Amsterdam airport. "I walked around some and waited for my flight," she said.

Ruth always took the long view. It appeared on a ring she wore on her right hand. She was very proud of it and showed it to me several times. It was a gold signet ring bearing Constantine's motto, *In hoc signo vinces*. Of course.

Eternal rest grant unto her, O Lord, and let your perpetual light shine upon her. May her soul, and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.

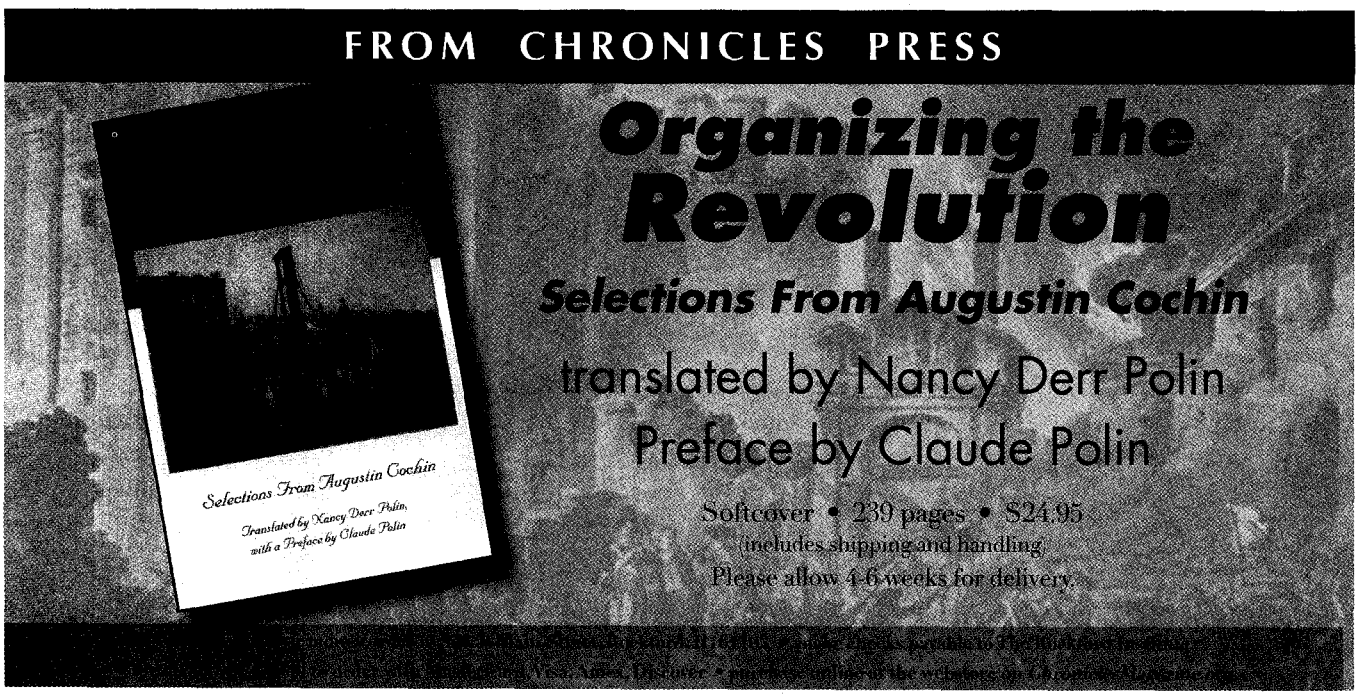
—*Christopher Check*

OBITER DICTA

Making her debut in the pages of *Chronicles* this month is our poet, **Jennifer Reeser.** She is the author of *An Alabaster Flask*, winner of the Word Press First Book Prize, and *Winterproof*, also published by Word Press. Her poems, essays, and translations of Russian and French literature appear online and internationally in such journals as *POETRY*, *National Review*, *Botteghe Oscure*, *SALT*, the *New Laurel Review*, the *Formalist*, *Blue Unicorn*, *Louisiana Literature*, *First Things*, *PIVOT*, the *Raintown Review*, *Disquieting Muses*, *Méasūre*, the *Louisiana Review*, and *The Dark Horse*. Her work is a two-time nominee for the Pushcart Prize and has been anthologized in (among others) Longman's textbooks *Introduction to Poetry*; *Introduction to Literature*, edited by X.J. Kennedy and Dana Gioia; and *Phoenix Rising: The Next Generation of American Formal Poets*, edited by Sonny Williams. In 2006, she was a member of the Russian/English translation critical seminar at the West Chester Poetry Conference, West Chester University. She lives in southern Louisiana. Her website may be viewed at *www.geocities.com/jdreeser*.

Our cover is provided by **Sandy Faulkner**, a farmer who lives in Pecatonica, Illinois. His hens lay the Official Eggs of the *Chronicles* staff.

Interior art is provided by our designer, **Melanie Anderson**. Mrs. Anderson received her B.F.A. from Northern Illinois University.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by Thomas Fleming

Bush's Whips, McCain's Scorpions

"He [John McCain] did everything that we asked of him, including arming the KLA."
—Albanian lobbyist Joe DioGuardi

When I hear the word *Belgrade* pronounced, I can almost smell the soft coal smoke tainting the chilly air of early spring. Waking in the Palace Hotel on Toplicin Venac, the slightly sour smell has filled the room, which I have vainly tried to cool by opening a window, and mixed with the musty carpet and the broad palette of odors coming up from the coffee shop: tobacco smoke, barbecued and roasted meats, and coffee, which back then I did not dare call by its proper name, *Turska kafa*, but *Srpska kafa* and now, less patriotically, *domaca kafa* (domestic coffee). Stepping out onto the street in the early 90's, the first impression was of something missing—traffic. Only the police and the mafia (sometimes a distinction without a difference) could find a supply of gas or afford the price, if they could. I remember visiting Blazo Perovic's office repeatedly in hopes of getting both a car and a driver to take me to Kosovo, but he would offer only one or the other, and I ended up taking the train. What cars there were, as gas became more available, were the detritus of the communist world: Rumanian Ladas, East German Wartburgs, Czechoslovak Skodas, Volkswagen Golfs made in Yugoslavia, and, of course, Yugos. Out in the countryside, the only traffic problem was presented by the many horse-drawn wagons that had been dragged out of sheds and put back in service.

In just the 15 years I have been going to Serbia, Belgrade has changed, superficially, a good deal, and I perhaps have changed a good deal more. The Palace has installed new carpeting and upgraded the rooms. Besides I am now staying in the luxurious Admiral Club Hotel on Venizelosova. Although there are still even older communist junkers on the street, there are also many newer cars from France, Germany, Italy, and the United States. One friend even imported a Plymouth Voyager in which I have traveled many a happy mile across much of the former Yugoslavia. In the early 90's many of the shops on Knez Mihajlova were closed, and those that were open had few foreign goods on sale, though there were plenty of books. I remember getting dinner for three, including two courses, *rakija*, and wine, at a nice place near the National Theater for about $20. Today the same dinner would be about $75.

The comparatively high prices in Belgrade are a sign of a gradual economic improvement that is beginning to lift many Serbs out of the abject poverty imposed by the United States and her satellites, but they are also an indication of the success of Western NGOs—George Soros's Open Society Institute, in particular—in luring young Serbs away from their Orthodox and patriotic roots and into the transnational cash nexus. Tempted by the promise of nice cars, comfortable apartments, and long vacations, the quarrelsome little peoples of Europe are one by one surrendering their ability to make trouble for the world-controllers.

For the Serbs, the issue was and is and will be, so long as there are Serbs, Kosovo. At the DSS rally in Trg Republike (Square of the Republic) on May 9, Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica's supporters were sporting T-shirts declaring "*Kosovo je Srbija*" ("Kosovo is Serbia"), but Belgrade is home territory to the Europhile young professionals who would like nothing better than to forget the past, forget their defeat in 1389, forget five centuries of Turkish oppression, forget the genocide inflicted on their people living in Croatia and Bosnia during the first independent state of Croatia during the 1940's, forget the dirty part played by the United States in supporting Slavic Muslims in Bosnia and terrorist Albanian Muslims in Kosovo.

On a brief jaunt down to Kosovo, my colleagues (Srdja Trifkovic, Doug Bandow, Jim Jatras, Sunil Ram, Egor Engelhardt, and Raphael Israeli) and I visited Bishop Artemije at the crudely restored Banjska Monastery (destroyed by the Muslims ages ago). The bishop, who has come to symbolize the Serb resistance, was leaving for the beautiful monastery of Gracanica and had to have an armed guard provided by UNMIK (United Nations Mission in Kosovo). The small detail of "soldiers" included Danes and Turks. "They're back," quipped one of the Americans. The soldiers attempted a few pleasantries, but I could not be polite. In themselves, they may be as innocent as a virtuous guard at Auschwitz, but I cannot help hating everything they represent: a global empire that is willing to sacrifice Christians to the savagery of the Muslim Albanian narco-terrorists whom John McCain armed.

When the Democrats accuse John McCain of wanting to continue the failed policies of the Bush administration, they are wide of the mark. George W. Bush, before taking office, represented himself as a fiscal conservative and a noninterventionist. McCain has always been a tax-and-spend leftist, but in recent years he has become a quick-on-the-trigger cowboy looking for any excuse to

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send Americans into battle. Today Iraq, tomorrow Iran, next week Serbia and Russia. When he is elected, many of his supporters will dream of those golden years of Bush when moderates (by comparison) such as Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz were running our wars.

Raphi Israeli is, as his name might suggest, an Israeli, and he cannot help advising Bishop Artemije to imitate Israel's example. Why not begin planting colonies of Serbs within the Serb-dominated "northern triangle" of Kosovo and then begin to expand the borders of the Serbian pockets? In fact, as he knows too well, it has been the Albanians who have been expanding. Even on the Serbian side of Mitrovica, on the northern bank of the Ibar River, the Albanians (with international help, naturally) are building housing complexes that will someday surround the Serbs and make it impossible for them to defend themselves. Our tax dollars at work.

In the days leading up to the election on May 11, observers were predicting a significant win for the Radical Party led by Toma Nikolic. If the Radicals could form a government, they would quickly proceed to reject the offers of the European Union and embrace Russia in a close alliance. Many Serbs who watched on television the military display in Moscow on the anniversary of their victory in World War II must have been wondering how and when the Russians could flex some of their restored military muscle on behalf of Kosovo Serbs. In the event, the Radicals' vote was a disappointing second place to the Westernizing Democratic Party led by Boris Tadic. The Western press reported the election results as a glorious victory for Tadic and a final rejection of Serb nationalism, but it is a little more complicated than that.

Tadic's Democrats were, indeed, the big winner, gaining 102 seats in parliament, while Nikolic's Radicals are expected to have only 78. But since Nikolic campaigned in coalition with Kostunica, whose DSS party will hold 30, the "nationalists" will have 108 seats as opposed to Tadic's 102. The balance of power is held by the Socialists, Slobodan Milosevic's old party, whose 20 seats would give either side a victory.

The Socialists have grudges against both Kostunica and Tadic, who were in the coalition that ousted Milosevic, but the Radicals present fewer problems. Their party's real leader, Vojislav Seselj, joined Milosevic's government and is being tried at the infamous Hague Tribunal. The Socialists, it is certainly true, have tried to distance themselves from Milosevic's "nationalism," but to serve under a party that illegally arrested their leader and sent him to the Hague should be a pill too bitter for men to swallow.

We shall see. As of today (May 19) no decision has been made. The Socialist leader Ivca Dacic has been in meetings with Nikolic and Kostunica, but the meetings have been interrupted by Dacic's mysterious trip to Moscow.

In conversations with former members of Milosevic's government, I could detect little affection for Kostunica and scant respect for Nikolic. On the other hand, they were dead set against capitulation to the United States, which is what a Tadic government, whatever lies they might tell the voters, will represent. In fact, not all the Serbs who voted for Tadic believed they were casting a vote for surrender. Several younger Belgraders I spoke with believe Tadic when he insists he will never give up Serbia's claim to Kosovo—though it is hard to believe he will do anything to assert such a claim—and many of them find the Radicals' nationalist rhetoric far too extreme. When they open up with mouths blazing, the Radicals are certainly their own worst enemy, though in a meeting with Radical leaders I had a year or so ago, they seemed quite charming. I was a bit surprised that they did not moderate the virulence of their anti-Catholic rhetoric in the presence of two Catholic journalists, but I found their candor, as they say, refreshing.

Tadic, meanwhile, is already claiming that as president he will prevent any attempt to include the Radicals. This is not only a threat but a clearly illegal threat. The younger Belgraders also said they were disappointed in Kostunica's leadership. When I suggested that a Nikolic-Kostunica coalition would provide both a strong executive and a judicious moderation, they agreed. They probably still voted for Tadic, but the cleavage is not so clear-cut as the media is claiming.

George Soros and George Bush would both like us to believe that the future of Kosovo as an Albanian state is absolutely certain. By some mystic and irreversible law, U.S. satellites are a fixed star in the political galaxy, and, in the decades to come, the United States will expand her sphere of influence first over the globe and then over the entire universe. As any student of history knows, this rhetoric of universal sovereignty is only the usual self-serving myth put forward by failing empires. No human institution is immortal, and in the history of nations, there are no certainties.

On the face of it, resistance would appear to be futile. Although the lyrics of a patriotic song declare that only a liar would say Serbia is a small nation, a country of eight million people could not for long hold against France, much less the United States. Whatever government is formed in the coming weeks, its leaders should be aware that neither open resistance (as advocated by some unbalanced American supporters of Serbia) nor capitulation can restore Kosovo or defend Serbia.

There is an Aesop fable that teaches this lesson directly:

> Two Pots, one of earthenware, the other of brass, were carried down a river in a flood. The Brazen Pot begged his companion to keep by his side, and he would protect him. "Thank you for your offer," said the Earthen Pot, but that is just what I am afraid of; if you will only keep at a distance, I may float down in safety; but should we come in contact, I am sure to be the sufferer."

The moral of the tale is simple: "Avoid too powerful neighbors; for should there be a collision, the weakest goes

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to the wall." While Serbia will naturally have to seek alliances and make bargains with powerful states, she should always, like any small state, beware of close contacts in which she may be damaged or even destroyed. This warning is especially relevant to Serbia's relations with the United States. Open enmity with Washington could easily lead to complete disaster, while a naive and trusting friendship could cost the Serbian people not just their territory but their very soul.

The list of American allies who have been betrayed and destroyed is a long one and includes Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines, the Somozas in Nicaragua, the shah of Iran, and, more recently, Saddam Hussein. One of Slobodan Milosevic's many serious mistakes was to believe the Americans would keep the promises they had made or stick to the terms of formal treaties.

The anti-American left hates the Serbs as a rooted people who cling to their traditions and cherish the memory of their defeat in 1389. On the other hand, patriotic Americans, once they have been indoctrinated in the idea that Serbs are the enemy of the United States, are even more eager to go to war to punish the enemies of their country. Since American education has made sure that not one American in twenty knows that Belgrade is the capital of Serbia, much less that Kosovo is part of the Serbian heartland, one can hardly blame ignorant Americans for believing the lies concocted in the media and taught in the public schools.

Few foreigners appear to realize that the United States is not a unified nation with a common will. In addition to the usual distinctions of race, region, and religion, we are divided ideologically between an anti-American, anti-Christian, anti-Western elite class that panders to racial minorities and uses multiculturalism as a weapon to destroy our heritage, and a naive and patriotic majority that would gladly support the Serbs in their struggle with Islamic neighbors, if only they were properly informed. The leadership of the Democratic Party, which entirely belongs to the former group, would like to destroy or at least corrupt Serbia, whose traditions represent everything they hate: patriotism, Christianity, and self-reliance.

Rank-and-file conservative Republicans (if not their leaders) are willing to hold their nose and vote for John McCain, a man of decidedly modest attainments and integrity, because of his war record and his lip-service support for the so-called "War on Terror," a "war" that includes arming and paying Islamic terrorists in Bosnia and Kosovo, as long as their friends in America come up with the cash.

The unfortunate truth is that in the Balkans the two sides of the divided America come together. The anti-American left hates the Serbs as a rooted people who cling to their traditions and cherish the memory of their defeat in 1389. The simple equation is that Serbs equal Confederate Southerners who equal Nazis. Every manufactured report about so-called mass graves is a reflection of this propaganda. On the other hand, patriotic Americans, once they have been indoctrinated in the idea that Serbs are the enemy of the United States, are even more eager to go to war to punish the enemies of their country. Since American education has made sure that not one American in twenty knows that Belgrade is the capital of Serbia, much less that Kosovo is part of the Serbian heartland, one can hardly blame ignorant Americans for believing the lies concocted in the media and taught in the public schools.

This brings us to the central problem in Serbia's relations with the United States. While patriotic Christians in the United States might someday wake up to realize they have been backing the wrong side in the Balkans, the multiculturalist left will always hate any Serb who refuses to hate himself and his country. In other words, the agenda of the "Open Society" Institute and other multiculturalist groups in Serbia is a program for suicide. As difficult as the task may seem, Serbian leaders must attempt to arrive at a common understanding with Americans who fear Islamic *jihad* and can be made to understand that the Serbs are, once again, a bulwark against the Islamic hordes who threaten our civilization.

There is nothing in American multiculturalism that can help the Serbian people. It is a religion of amnesia, which American leftists wish to export around the world. When a small nation with an historical sense of identity complains about past wrongs, the response of American political leaders and their spokesmen in the media is always the same: Forget the past and concentrate on the future, which always means forget about American aggression as the price of receiving American money.

Whoever is elected president in November will undoubtedly be the worst president in American history. All three candidates give off a strong odor of corruption. If Obama has his Tony Rezco, McCain has his Joe DioGuardi and Joe Bananas. The Republicans gave us an irresponsible and unwinnable war in Iraq, while the previous Democratic administration (with strong support from Bob Dole and John McCain) has the distinction of being the first to bomb a European city since the end of World War II. And for what? To assist Albanian narcoterrorists in their hundred-year-long campaign of ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. McCain, combining the wicked nuttiness of Madeleine Albright with the nutty wickedness of Paul Wolfowitz, will be able to tell the Americans and Europeans what the power-hungry, gold-greedy son of Solomon told the Israelites: My predecessor "hath chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions." ◁

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by Joseph Sobran

Pickwickian Popery

I've been reading Garry Wills for more than 40 years now, with mixed admiration, delight, and alarm. In the early 60's he wrote for *National Review*, the youngest of its many brilliant contributors. He then seemed to be an orthodox Catholic and political conservative; but that began to change in 1968, when he suddenly matured into a man of the Catholic left: an opponent of the Vietnam War, an eloquent enthusiast of the Berrigan brothers, Martin Luther King, Jr., Lillian Hellman, I.F. Stone, and others of similar persuasion.

Now 74, Wills has written dozens of books on many subjects. He seems incapable of producing a dull one, or even a trite sentence, so I still enjoy reading him. I always learn from him, but as a rule his works, however impressive, strike me as marred by rather obvious fallacies, unworthy of a man of his intelligence.

This is especially true of his recent series of books about the Catholic Church, notably his little best-seller *What Jesus Meant*. It deepens the mystery of another of his volumes, *Why I Am a Catholic*. The real question is why he still calls himself a Catholic.

A tempting answer is that it pays better than open apostasy. But that's too cynical; Wills is obviously sincere. Still, he rejects a lot of distinctive Catholic teachings—about the Eucharist, the Virgin Mary, the priesthood, the papacy, and so on. (Among the matters on which he dissents: the Immaculate Conception, the perpetual virginity of Mary, transubstantiation, abortion, contraception, homosexuality, sexual morality in general, and apostolic succession.) One might agree with the official Catholic teachings on nearly everything without being a Catholic; the fundamental question is whether one accepts the authority of the Catholic Church.

But Wills denies that Christ founded any church at all, or that Rome speaks with any special, binding, or final authority. Most people, including Protestants, would probably agree that if Wills is still a Catholic, it is in a rather Pickwickian sense. (He is fond of quoting Dan Berrigan's *bon mot* about the Church of Rome: "She's a whore, but she's our mother.")

Does Wills not see where this leads, or does he expect his readers not to see? Christ promised to be with His people to the end of time. Why (assuming Wills is right) has the Lord allowed the great majority of believers to be so badly misled for two millennia? It is hard to believe that a full understanding of our Faith had to await 20th-century scholarship.

And why does Wills accept the same four Gospels the early Church approved (of many available) when, following "the mass of scholars," he rejects several of the supposedly Pauline epistles on stylistic grounds? How is the ordinary unscholarly reader, ignorant of Greek, to choose among them? For that matter, why should that reader accept Paul's word as authoritative? (By the way, Wills' remarks on translating the Gospels in his last book came as a revelation to me.)

One early martyr, I recall, was a young boy who died to defend the Host he was carrying from profanation. And countless more recent saints have believed in the doctrines Wills scorns, including those the Protestants used to revile as "the idolatry of the Mass." For my part, I put more trust in the faith of Padre Pio than in the strongest arguments of modern scholars.

Wills, I should mention, is at his best when he makes the case for the literal factual authenticity of the Resurrection. He is much weaker when he contends that Gospel references to Jesus' "brothers" mean that Mary did not remain a virgin after His birth, contrary to the Catholic view that they were probably cousins. He says that Koine Greek "has very clear and detailed terms for all blood relationships" (so that those "brothers" must have been Mary's children); I don't know about that, but if it's true, it seems reasonable to assume that there must also have been a Greek term for half-brothers. And as Scott Hahn points out, any other children of the widowed Mary would have been obliged to support her, making it unnecessary for Jesus, as He was dying on the cross, to commit her to the care of the Apostle John.

One nods in agreement when Wills writes, "Those who despise the poor are despising Jesus"; but when he adds that "Those persecuting gays are persecuting Jesus," one wants to cry out, "Whoa there, Garry! It's not quite the same thing!" The Beatitudes say nothing about sodomites, and Saint Paul is rather stern toward them, so at this point it becomes hard to suppress the suspicion that trendiness has got way out of control here.

If Jesus did not found a church, if there is no such thing as apostolic succession, what of the authority He gave the Twelve to forgive sin (or refuse to forgive it)? Was that delegation to last only during their lives? That seems very odd. And if so, why did they elect a successor for Judas Iscariot (whom Wills calls "Saint Judas")?

But maybe the final answer to the kind of religion Wills espouses is that it makes Christianity not catholic, but esoteric—too dependent on recent scholarship to have been available to the great masses of common believers over the centuries. It is a religion for highly civilized people, whereas Jesus brought a religion fit for the savages (farmers, warriors, journalists) most of us are. Which is to say, catholic. ⊕

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John McCain on Foreign Policy

Even Worse Than Bush

by Ted Galen Carpenter

Over the years, John McCain has acquired a reputation as a maverick Republican. Independents and even some Democrats who loathe George W. Bush's foreign-policy record seem to believe that McCain would be a significant improvement. In several GOP primaries earlier this year, most notably those in New Hampshire and Michigan, nearly one third of voters who stated that they oppose the Iraq war cast ballots for McCain. That seems to defy logic, since the Arizona senator has been the most vocal critic of Bush's Iraq policy, arguing as far back as late 2003 that he should commit *even more* troops to the war.

But it is not merely McCain's views on Iraq policy that mark him as an überhawk. He has also advocated hardline policies toward Iran, Syria, and North Korea, and has even staked out confrontational positions toward such major powers as China and Russia. The evidence suggests that a McCain administration would be even more reckless and aggressive than the current one.

McCain did not enter Congress as a militant hawk. During the 1980's and early 90's, his reputation as a Republican foreign-policy maverick was well deserved. He was one of the few Republicans to criticize Ronald Reagan's decision to send U.S. troops to Lebanon in 1982. To McCain, such a murky and dangerous mission that lacked any connection to important U.S. security interests was all too reminiscent of the Vietnam debacle. To advocates of a more selective and cautious strategy, McCain's skepticism about the Lebanon mission was understandable, given his horrific experience as a prisoner of war in North Vietnam for five years. His opposition to the Lebanon venture was vindicated in October 1983 when 241 Marines perished in a truck-bombing of their barracks in Beirut.

In the initial post-Cold War period, McCain continued to advocate a policy that appealed to cautious realists. True, he supported the Gulf War, but only after an initial period of agonizing reluctance, and his response to the U.S. intervention in Somalia the next year was unrelentingly hostile, particularly when that mission expanded from the original goal of providing humanitarian relief to starving Somalis into an amorphous nation-building enterprise led by the United Nations. Once again, his skepticism appeared vindicated when 18 Army Rangers died in a firefight against the forces of one of the numerous feuding factions in Mogadishu.

Still, there were troubling signs that he might not be the cautious realist that his positions on the Lebanon and Somalia missions suggested. For example, as evidence mounted in 1993 and 1994 that North Korea was pursuing a nuclear-weapons program, McCain embraced an extremely hawkish position. He suggested that the United States consider air strikes against the Yongbyon reactor complex and other North Korean military targets if Pyongyang did not immediately abandon its nuclear activities. When the Clinton administration negotiated the 1994 Agreed Framework under which North Korea pledged to freeze its program in exchange for aid from the United States and its East Asian allies, McCain grumbled that the arrangement was "all carrots and no sticks."

The following year, he endorsed U.S. air strikes against the Bosnian Serbs, albeit after another period of hesitation. The civil war convulsing Bosnia should have been precisely the kind of conflict that a cautious realist would have wanted us to avoid. America had no significant economic or strategic interests at stake in that internecine struggle, yet McCain advocated U.S. involvement, apparently for no better reasons than bloodshed was occurring and NATO's credibility appeared to be at stake.

Senator McCain's hawkish posture involving Balkan issues deepened when the Clinton administration pushed for U.S.-led military action to compel Serbia to relinquish control over Kosovo. Unlike many of his Republican colleagues in Congress who argued that America had no interests that justified intervention on behalf of the rebel Muslim "Kosovars," McCain endorsed military action—even more vigorously than the Clinton administration did. During the 1999 war, NATO forces relied entirely on high-altitude bombing of Serbian targets, but Senator McCain wanted to send in ground forces. His criticism that Clinton's policy was insufficiently bold foreshadowed his critique of the Bush administration's strategy in Iraq.

Since the dawn of the 21st century, Senator McCain has been among the most hawkish Republican political figures. That became evident in 2002 when McCain proposed that the United States openly threaten to use military force

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unless Pyongyang capitulates on the nuclear issue. "After first responding appropriately to North Korean violations of the [1994] agreement and refusing even to discuss with North Korea its extortion demands," wrote McCain in the January 20, 2003, issue of the *Weekly Standard*, "the administration now appears to have embraced, and in some respects exceeded, the style and substance of the Clinton administration's diplomacy." He was especially perturbed that President Bush and Secretary of State Colin Powell "publicly ruled out the use of force, although force could eventually prove to be the only means to prevent North Korea from acquiring a nuclear arsenal."

It was also clear that he did not care much about the views of other countries in East Asia, sneering that they should "spare us the usual lectures about American unilateralism." Noting that we would "prefer the company of North Korea's neighbors" in a military campaign, he emphasized that "we will make do without it if we must." The "neighbors" to which the senator referred include Japan and South Korea—Washington's most prominent allies in East Asia for more than half a century.

Given the possibility of a McCain administration confronting the still-unresolved North Korean nuclear issue, these allies have ample reason to be apprehensive, for McCain's views regarding North Korea have not become noticeably less belligerent since early 2003. He has remained a staunch critic of the six-party talks—the diplomatic process involving North Korea, the United States, Japan, China, Russia, and South Korea that is attempting to resolve the nuclear problem through negotiations. Policy toward North Korea is one area in which a McCain administration would almost certainly be more confrontational than what we have witnessed during the Bush years.

The same is true regarding Iran's nuclear program. McCain has received widespread criticism for a "joke" at an April 2007 campaign stop in which he sang "bomb bomb bomb, bomb-bomb Iran" to the tune of the Beach Boys' "Barbara Ann." But his nonjoking comments are only marginally less troubling. He has stated repeatedly that an Iran with nuclear weapons poses an "unacceptable risk" to regional and global stability. "There is only one thing worse than military action, and that is a nuclear armed Iran."

Perhaps most ominously, McCain has long been an advocate of preemptive war against "rogue regimes." A story in *USA Today* (March 26) featured the following comment: "Standing by while an odious regime with a history of support to terrorism develops weapons whose use by terrorists could literally kill millions of Americans is not a choice. It is an abdication."

McCain was strongly supportive of the Bush administration's decision to invade Iraq and depose Saddam Hussein. When it became evident that U.S. expectations of a rapid success in creating a stable, democratic Iraq were unrealistic, though, he did not join a majority of Americans in turning against the war. Already in November 2003, he was calling for the deployment of at least another division, "giving us the necessary manpower to conduct a focused counterinsurgency campaign across the Sunni triangle."

As U.S. military fortunes in Iraq deteriorated, he became more strident in his advocacy of escalation. And he never shrank from the probable costs in treasure and blood. In a speech to the American Enterprise Institute in November 2005, he stated:

> Securing ever-increasing parts of Iraq and preventing the emergence of new terrorist safe havens will require more troops and money. It will take time, probably years, and mean more American casualties. Those are terrible prices to pay. But with the stakes so high, I believe we must choose the strategy with the best chance of success.

McCain regarded President Bush's decision a little more than a year later to implement the "Surge" as a vindication of his own strategy. He then went to extraordinary lengths to portray the Surge as a success. On a visit to Iraq in mid-2007, for example, he announced that the security environment was vastly improved, citing his ability to stroll down several streets near a Baghdad market in safety. What McCain failed to mention was that he was accompanied by more than 100 heavily armed U.S. troops while several missile-laden helicopters hovered overhead.

Melanie Anderson

Iraq's ongoing instability raises concerns about McCain's proposal for a long-term U.S. troop presence. He gave his political opponents ammunition earlier this year when he encountered a question at a political rally about the possibility that U.S. troops might have to stay in Iraq for 50 years. McCain's flippant response was "make it a century."

Republicans vehemently argue that critics have taken his comment out of context. The senator made it clear in subsequent remarks that he was not proposing turning the Iraq conflict into the 21st century's version of the Hundred Years War. Rather, he was suggesting a reduced, long-term U.S. military presence once Iraq became stable

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and peaceful. His model for that strategy is the U.S. troop presence in South Korea, which is now in its 55th year following the armistice that ended the Korean War.

But that is not exactly reassuring. Iraq is nothing like South Korea—a cohesive society that welcomed U.S. military protection from communist North Korea, which had already created a bloodbath on the Korean peninsula in a failed attempt to compel reunification.

American forces in South Korea have never had to confront an armed insurgency or the ever-present prospect of civil war between ethno-religious factions. The situation in Iraq is obviously not comparable. When one thinks of a long-term occupation of Iraq (even with reduced forces), a closer analogy is the dangerous and frustrating British mission in Northern Ireland from the late 1960's through the 90's.

Although McCain insists that Iraq is the "central front" in the War on Terror, he seems somewhat hazy about the specifics of the threat of radical Islam. As a member of a senatorial delegation visiting Iraq earlier this year, he erroneously accused Iran of aiding Al Qaeda and suffered the embarrassment of an on-camera correction by his friend and fellow überhawk, Sen. Joe Lieberman, that Tehran was aiding "Shiite extremists," not the Sunni zealots of Al Qaeda. Yet, during a Senate hearing a few weeks later, he committed a similar gaffe, describing Al Qaeda as a Shiite group, and then adding "Sunni, Shiite, whatever."

Mistakes about such basic facts are both surprising and troubling coming from someone who repeatedly touts his foreign-policy experience and credentials. Unfortunately, those verbal blunders may reflect more than rhetorical sloppiness. They are indicative of McCain's tendency to conflate disparate movements, regimes, and problems. Troublesome regimes such as those in Iran, Syria, and North Korea pose challenges for U.S. foreign policy, but lumping them together as rogue states obscures more than it illuminates.

John McCain harbors a barely disguised hostility toward China, arguing that her growing economy and military modernization pose a great threat to the United States. On several occasions, he has cited China's rise as a justification for even greater U.S. military spending. Most independent experts estimate Beijing's military budget to be between $50 and $75 billion, and the Pentagon contends it is between $84 and $125 billion. At any rate, McCain considers the amount excessive for China's legitimate defense needs. Yet he does not view the U.S. military budget (including supplementals for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan) of nearly $800 billion to be excessive.

He also advocates provocative symbolic snubs of the Chinese government. For example, he criticized President Bush's decision to attend the opening ceremonies of the Beijing Olympics, because of human-rights abuses.

Cato Institute foreign-policy analyst Malou Innocent concedes that Beijing's authoritarianism is troubling, but she notes that "Senator McCain appears to preclude the possibility of building a constructive relationship with China unless it becomes fully democratic." That attitude puts at risk America's extensive economic relationship with China as well as ignores the numerous issues on which we need China's help—most notably in trying to defuse the North Korean and Iranian crises. This is yet another area in which a McCain presidency would likely be more confrontational and destabilizing than the Bush presidency.

McCain seems friendly to China, though, compared to his attitude toward Russia. He advocates NATO membership for Ukraine and Georgia, over Moscow's strident objections. "Western nations should make clear that the solidarity of NATO, from the Baltic to the Black Sea, is indivisible and that the organization's doors remain open to all democracies committed to the defense of freedom." McCain strongly supports the Georgian government's feud with Russia over the status of two secessionist regions, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, even though there are no discernible American interests at stake in that dispute.

Combined with McCain's penchant for needlessly provocative policies toward both small adversarial states and major powers is his unwillingness to reconsider long-standing U.S. security commitments around the world. He has enthusiastically promoted the continuation of NATO, even though the original mission of that alliance disappeared with the demise of the Soviet empire. Indeed, McCain has been a vocal proponent of NATO's eastward expansion, a process that entails increasingly murky and dangerous U.S. security commitments to small client states that add little or nothing to America's own military capabilities.

McCain seems to harbor a preference for initiating or maintaining U.S. obligations to parasitic security clients. A prime example is his willingness to continue the American alliance with and troop presence in South Korea—the model for his long-term designs on Iraq. His invocation of South Korea highlights the fallacy of his overall approach to security strategy. Washington has provided a lucrative defense subsidy to South Korean taxpayers for more than half a century. Today, South Korea has twice the population and an economy 40 times larger than North Korea, its only plausible enemy. Yet South Korea remains heavily dependent on the United States for her security. That is a wonderful deal for South Korean taxpayers, but not so much for their American counterparts. For a self-proclaimed conservative to embrace such a needless, expensive burden is both surprising and maddening.

The foreign policy that John McCain now advocates is reckless and promiscuously interventionist. If he were a university student majoring in international relations or security studies, he would deserve a resounding F for his analysis of the crucial issues that the United States has confronted over the past 14 or 15 years. After a promising start, his performance has steadily deteriorated. The last thing that America needs is an even more aggressive and incompetent steward of foreign policy than George W. Bush has been. ◁

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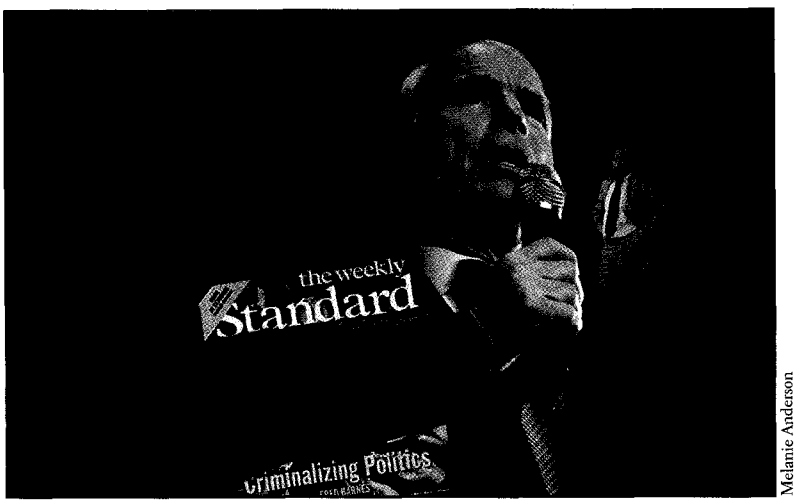
Neo-McCainism

The Highest Stage of Neoconservatism?

by Leon Hadar



Melanie Anderson

It is difficult to imagine, but there was a time when pundits in Washington were tagging John McCain as the ultimate *un*neoconservative Republican figure whose nationalist yet pragmatic approach to foreign policy was being viewed with suspicion by your average global democratic crusader—not to mention the members of what Pat Buchanan described as Israel's Amen Corner.

When, as a freshman Arizona Republican representative, McCain warned that, by virtue of our involvement in Lebanon, the U.S. military could be drawn into a Middle Eastern quagmire, he was attacked by the hawks in his party. But his position was eventually embraced by the Reagan administration and Congress after suicide bombers blew up the Marine barracks in Beirut.

McCain's contrarian views on America's post-Vietnam global strategy became even more evident after he replaced Barry Goldwater in the Senate, when he expressed concerns about President George H.W. Bush's plan to send ground troops to the Persian Gulf to force Iraq's Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait in August 1990. "If you get involved in a major ground war in the Saudi desert, I think support will erode significantly," McCain told the *Los Angeles Times*. "Nor should it be supported." And he made a point that sounds familiar to antiwar critics today: "We cannot even contemplate, in my view, trading American blood for Iraqi blood."

The Arizona senator continued to exhibit his *Realpolitik* instincts during the early years of the Clinton administration when he urged pulling U.S. forces out of Somalia and expressed skepticism about the idea promoted by Bill Kristol and Robert Kagan to use U.S. military force as part of an effort to end the civil war in the former Yugoslavia.

McCain's conversion from what could be described as a "Powell Doctrine Republican"—subscribing to the notion that Americans should deploy U.S. troops only when core American interests are at stake and an exit strategy is in place—into a flaming neoconservative interventionist took place sometime in the late 1990's and somewhere on the road to Pristina just when he started planning his first run for the presidency. McCain called upon the Clinton administration to take military action to end the war in Kosovo in 1998, blaming the Serbs for the bloodshed there and citing familiar neoconservative concerns about the need to bring an end to an humanitarian catastrophe.

"Seeking to differentiate his views from those of other Republican presidential aspirants and from the growing isolationism of House Republicans, [McCain] would place his new interventionist instincts within a larger ideological framework," writes historian John Judis in the *New Republic*. "That ideological framework was neoconservatism," he explains, adding that "McCain began reading *The Weekly Standard* and conferring with its editors, particularly Bill Kristol," while selecting leading neoconservative figures as his advisors. It was around that time that McCain also started to promote the U.S.-led effort to oust Saddam Hussein from power, cosponsoring the Iraq Liberation Act, which called for regime change in Baghdad.

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What Judis and other observers fail to mention is that McCain's metamorphosis into a neocon was also an indication that he was planning to play the Israel Card during his race against George W. Bush by marketing himself to supporters of the Jewish state, including the large contingency of Christian Zionists, as the pro-Israel candidate. It was part of a strategy of contrasting McCain's views with those of Bush the Elder, whose criticism of Israel's settlement policies during his last year in office had marked him as an "anti-Israeli," if not an antisemite, in the eyes of members of the Israel lobby in Washington.

From that perspective, the neoconservative agenda of establishing American hegemony in the Middle East, starting with regime change and nation building in Iraq and followed by the spread of democracy in the entire Middle East and from the Balkans to the borders of China, seemed to be the centerpiece of McCain's new foreign policy. The irony is that it was not McCain but George W. Bush (who had sounded quite skeptical about nation building and lacked any strong pro-Israeli "credentials" during his first race for the White House) who ended up implementing the entire neoconservative program after September 11.

Like the rest of the neocon crowd, McCain became a cheerleader for the invasion of Iraq—echoing the Bush administration's talking points by warning about Saddam's weapons of mass destruction and painting rosy scenarios about postwar Iraq and the Middle East. "Our technology, particularly air-to-ground technology, is vastly improved," McCain told CNN's Larry King on December 9, 2002. "I don't think you're going to have to see the scale of numbers of troops that we saw, nor the length of the buildup, obviously, that we had back in 1991." And during an interview with Chris Matthews on *Hardball* (March 24, 2003), he said that "there's no doubts [*sic*] in my mind, once these people are gone, that we will be welcomed as liberators." His views contrasted with those of Sen. Chuck Hagel (R-NE) and Secretary of State Colin Powell and other foreign-policy realists, such as former national-security advisor Brent Scowcroft and retired Gen. Anthony Zinni, who warned of the devastating costs of ousting Saddam Hussein and invading Iraq.

Against the backdrop of the growing mess in Iraq at the end of 2003, McCain, again reflecting the view of Kristol, started calling for an increase in the number of U.S. troops in Iraq, urging a tougher stance against Iran and her allies in the Middle East while hailing the U.S. alliance with Israel. McCain's early backing for the "Surge," his suggestion that we might have to use military force to prevent Iran from going nuclear, and his staunch support for Israel have become central to his current presidential campaign. In fact, he admitted that he could only win the election if he would be able to convince the majority of the American voters of the need to "stay the course" in Iraq and by extension to win wide public support for the U.S. hegemonic agenda in the Middle East.

Achieving that goal seems like Mission Impossible to anyone who studies the results of recent public-opinion polls, which indicate that a clear majority of Americans believe the war in Iraq was a mistake and that Washington should start a gradual withdrawal of American troops. Nor is the American public showing any enthusiasm for McCain's (and Bush's) Freedom Agenda in the Middle East, including the need to effect a regime change in Iran. If anything, the continuing bloodshed in Mesopotamia coupled with rising energy prices and the housing and financial crises explain why the American people are in an isolationist mood these days.

Taking on a Churchillian persona, McCain has vowed to face up to the "defeatists" and the "appeasers" who are supposedly unwilling to fight the forces of "Islamofascism." "There's [*sic*] going to be other wars," McCain told a television interviewer. "I'm sorry to tell you, there's [*sic*] going to be other wars. We will never surrender but there will be other wars." He has recruited all the top neoconservative thinkers, including Robert Kagan, Max Boot, and John R. Bolton, and has appointed Randy Scheunemann, a well-connected lobbyist and political insider with strong ties to the neoconservatives, as his leading political advisor. And as he campaigns, his foreign-policy addresses tend to recycle the latest editorial in the *Weekly Standard* or echo the latest ideas raised by Kagan, Boot, and Bolton in their recent op-ed pieces.

In March, during a major foreign-policy address in Los Angeles, McCain stressed that the "War on Terror" would continue to be the focus of his administration's global strategy; the "transcendent challenge" of "radical jihadism" would be the lens through which President McCain would view U.S. foreign policy. At the same time, he promised to replace the United Nations with a League of Democracies that will include Israel—but none of the nondemocratic Arab governments. In short, McCain is committed to an interventionist Wilsonian and Israel-centric foreign policy, under which his administration will complete the neoconservative grand strategic project in the Middle East that George W. Bush launched after September 11.

McCain and his advisors have insisted that he would adopt a more "pragmatic" and "multilateral" foreign-policy approach than that of the current administration. In some ways, however, when it comes to U.S. policy toward the Middle East, McCain sounds more bellicose than Bush. At a stop at Murrells Inlet VFW Hall in South Carolina during his "Straight Talk" tour, McCain was asked when he thought the U.S. military might "send an air mail message to Tehran." After infamously humming a few bars of "Bomb Iran," he explained that Tehran is "dedicated to the destruction of Israel" and that he, like President Bush, "will not allow Iran to destroy Israel."

"That is straight talk," explained conservative columnist Pat Buchanan. "You get John McCain in the White House, and I do believe we will be at war with Iran," he told MSNBC's Joe Scarborough. "That's one of the things that makes me very nervous about him." Buchanan added that

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there is no doubt that "John McCain is going to be a war president. His whole career is wrapped up in the military, national security. He's in Putin's face, he's threatening the Iranians, [and] we're going to be in Iraq a hundred years." Indeed, McCain's confrontational posture *vis-à-vis* Russia and China would make it almost impossible to continue pursuing current diplomatic efforts to engage Tehran and resolve the numerous problems—its nuclear program, its involvement in Iraq, its support for Lebanon's Hezbollah and Palestine's Hamas—through peaceful means.

Moreover, McCain has vowed to continue pursuing Bush's policies toward Israel-Palestine, which have helped to secure Israel's interests while leading to a diplomatic dead end for the peace process. When he was awarded the Henry "Scoop" Jackson Distinguished Service Award by JINSA (the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs) in fall 2006, McCain described himself as "pro-American and pro-Israeli," two terms he does not believe to be contradictory.

Fresh from sealing the Republican presidential nomination in March, McCain made an effort to burnish his credentials with a two-day trip to Israel, where he was joined by his Democratic neoconservative pal, Sen. Joe Lieberman (and Republican Lindsey Graham). Pledging "never again," McCain received a hero's welcome in Jerusalem during a visit to the Holocaust Museum (Yad Vashem) where supporters chanted "Mac is back" as he shook their hands and posed for photographs. During his meeting with Israeli officials and journalists, McCain emphasized the common strategic threats facing the United States and Israel, suggesting that Iran's alleged support for insurgents fighting U.S. troops in Iraq was linked to Tehran's aid for Hamas and Hezbollah. "In the difficult situations that lie ahead for Israel, it would be to its advantage for the White House to be occupied by a man like John McCain," wrote Amir Oren, the military analyst for *Ha'aretz*.

Historians caution us that, while it may be tempting to try to predict U.S. foreign policy under this or that president by deconstructing his statements and campaign speeches, in many cases the actual policy pursued by the candidate once he wins the White House is quite different.

For example, in their reelection campaigns, Woodrow Wilson and Franklin D. Roosevelt said they wanted to keep the United States out of World War I and World War II, respectively. However, both Democrats later led the country into direct military conflict. Richard Nixon opened relations with China and had a policy of *détente* toward the Soviet Union, and Ronald Reagan brokered an historic nuclear-arms-control agreement with Moscow—even though both men ran on staunch anticommunist platforms.

More recently, presidential candidate Bill Clinton bashed then-President George H.W. Bush for "coddling" the "tyrants" in Beijing and then, after he won office, promoted a normalized trade relationship with China and her accession to the World Trade Organization. Nor should one overlook the fact that, during a televised debate with Al Gore, presidential candidate George W. Bush scoffed at the notion that nation building should play an integral part in U.S. foreign policy.

Some of McCain's liberal fans in the media, including Judis, recall that once upon a time, before he joined the ranks of the neocons, McCain had been a cautious realist. Is it conceivable that President McCain, responding to the pressures of his office and the strategic realities of the Middle East—particularly the erosion of U.S. diplomatic and military power there—will have no choice but to take steps to begin a gradual withdrawal from Iraq, engage Iran and Syria, and reach an Israel-Palestine agreement? In fact, these views are shared by the *Realpolitik* wing of the Republican Party, which includes Colin Powell, Richard Armitage, Brent Scowcroft, and Henry Kissinger, all of whom have been opposed to or skeptical of the decision to invade Iraq, and all of whom, according to press reports, are now members of McCain's foreign-policy team.

Those who speculate that McCain will withdraw from Iraq, negotiate with Iran, and press Israel to withdraw from the occupied Arab territories tend to apply the "only Nixon could go to China" analogy—in other words, only a Republican with impressive national-security credentials could mobilize public and congressional support for making painful foreign-policy decisions. That is certainly a provocative suggestion. But testing it could prove to be very costly. After all, the guy who entertained his audience with "Bomb Iran" is probably not going to sing "Give Peace a Chance" any time soon. ◁▷

Line to Circle

by Jennifer Reeser

Willing to be disfavored on the theme
Of well-maintained restraint as it applies
To those I venerate, the things I prize,
And all priorities I most esteem,
Like a straight stroke within an artist's scheme
Of ovals—apt to few, unfit in size
Or scale, a fork where generally lies
A French curve—I will form the stern extreme.
Too much extended clarity of arc
Exists as yet in you, my friend, to end
A lenient, rolling vagrancy and talk,
And toward your widespread, catenary mark
From birth my temperament was meant to bend—
A charcoal shaft against a shield of chalk.

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The Dream Ticket

The Most Dangerous Man in America, Bankrolled By the Most Evil Man in the World

by Srdja Trifkovic

"While the natural instincts of democracy lead the people to banish distinguished men from power," Tocqueville wrote in *Democracy in America*, "an instinct no less powerful leads distinguished men to shun careers in politics, in which it is so very difficult to remain entirely true to oneself or to advance without self-abasement."

Some 170 years and 36 presidents later, the choice presented to the American people at this year's presidential election does not merely confirm the correctness of the Frenchman's assessment; it amplifies his verdict in an absurd, almost surreal manner.

Among America's presidents—many of them impressive and some great, especially in the early years—there have been a few warmongers, neurotics, ignoramuses, and dullards. No single chief executive has been marked by all of those traits, however.

Jackson was famously feisty and a true American hero. Polk waged a war of aggression, but at least that war could not be lost, and it increased the power of the country. Tyler, Fillmore, Buchanan, and Pierce have been maligned *ex post facto* after 1865 by the winners. Andrew Johnson, Grant, and Harding were personally flawed, rather than systemically destructive. Theodore Roosevelt was a trigger-happy imperialist, yet he was also intelligent, rational, and understood the uses and limits of American power in a multipolar world. George W. Bush has no such understanding, of course, but to his credit, he advocated a "humbler" foreign policy in 2000. His subsequent transmutation was mainly because of his malleability coupled with his delusional belief in divine guidance, rather than a preexistent pernicious design.

John McCain is the most dangerous man in today's America because this likely next occupant of the White House combines a muddled world outlook with an imbalanced personality, limited intelligence, and low character. Like Vladimir Ilich Lenin or Ted Kaczynski, he needs dehumanized adversaries and loves to hate, never mind the ideology. He pours scorn on powerful countries such as Russia or China, or weak ones such as Serbia, not because it makes any sense from the point of view of this country's security interests, but because they resist—or may resist—what his archneoconservative advisor Robert Kagan terms America's Benevolent Global Hegemony. He screams at his subordinates, red in the face and foaming at the mouth, and calls them names. He graduated 894th of 899 from the Naval Academy in Annapolis and famously lost five jets over Vietnam before finally being taken prisoner. He has taken money from his party's declared enemies while simultaneously seeking that same party's presidential nomination.

In brief, it is unsurprising that John McCain has attracted the attention of, and found a benefactor in, one of the most evil men in the world, George Soros.

As our readers may recall ("George Soros, Postmodern Villain," *Views*, February 2004), there is hardly a bad cause that the Philanthropist From Hell does not sponsor. From open borders and one-world government to gun control and Kosovo's independence, Soros is there, in person or through his Open Society Institute and a myriad of fellow-traveling outfits. In his "American" guise (he has a few others), he supports the Democratic Party because he sees it as the primary vehicle for the promotion of his agenda. Being an astute speculator, he is not limiting his options. In McCain he has discovered a nominal Republican who is willing to pursue key points of that agenda, to get the GOP to accept them as its mainstream position, and—potentially—to impose them on the country as official U.S. policy.

The point of contact was campaign-finance reform, and the channel of support was the Reform Institute, founded in 2001 and headed by the Arizona senator until 2005, when he resigned in order to prepare for another presidential bid. The RI was initially funded by Soros's Open Society Institute and by Teresa Heinz-Kerry's Tides Foundation. They were excited by the McCain-Feingold bill because it had the capacity to limit private groups' ability to challenge the institutionalized leftist bias of the mainstream electronic media with "issue ads"—such as those Swift Boat ads that inflicted so much damage on John Kerry in his subsequent presidential bid.

The rapport between McCain and Soros was cemented during the 2000 presidential campaign. On July 30, McCain delivered the keynote speech at Arianna Huffington's "Shadow Convention" in Philadelphia, an event bankrolled by Soros. That ultraliberal political forum was set up as a counterevent to the Republican National Convention, which was held in the same city two days later. Senator McCain was the only person to speak at both events. It was like a pretender for the presidency of the John Randolph Club giving the keynote speech to the Southern Poverty Law Center, in the same city, two days

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before the JRC's annual meeting.

When the Reform Institute opened shop under McCain's chairmanship in July 2001, Mrs. Huffington—a close associate and confidante of Soros—was on its advisory committee. The Institute was a pseudo-think tank designed to keep McCain's staff assembled and gainfully employed in anticipation of another presidential bid. Its offices were in the same building in Alexandria as his election committee, his PAC, and the lobbying firm of his 2000 campaign manager, Rick Davis. The Institute hired three other key campaign staffers: legal counsel Trevor Potter as legal counsel, finance director Carla Eudy as finance director, and press secretary Crystal Benton as . . . communications director.

The Constitutions and Legal Policy Program of Soros's Open Society Institute donated "above $50,000" to the RI while McCain was at its helm. In addition, the OSI distributed $300,000 in grants to different groups that defended McCain-Feingold from threatened legal challenges during its passage through Congress in 2002.

Last April, McCain tried to distance himself from his benefactor, with his old/new campaign manager Davis describing Soros as a "liberal mega-donor" who wants to "buy this election." The performance was as convincing as George H.W. Bush decrying the influence of "those Washington insiders." What matters is that McCain has not given back any money to Soros. He has not returned the $200,000 that the Reform Institute received in donations from Cablevision in 2002 and 2003 either, when McCain was on the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation. It was undoubtedly coincidental that, in a letter to the FCC written at that time, McCain supported Cablevision's proposal for the introduction of a more profitable cable pricing scheme.

The Reform Institute has promoted another important pillar of Soros's agenda: open and unlimited Third World immigration. According to an *Investor's Business Daily* editorial (September 27, 2007), vast pro-illegal immigration rallies across the country in 2006 were anything but a spontaneous uprising of hundreds of thousands of angry Mexicans. Soros's OSI had money-muscle there, too, through its $17-million Justice Fund, which included involvement in the immigration rallies and funding of illegal-immigrant activist groups for subsequent court cases: "So what looked like a wildfire grassroots movement really was a manipulation from OSI's glassy Manhattan offices. The public had no way of knowing until the release of OSI's 2006 annual report."

This is not to say that McCain's support of illegal immigration correlates exclusively with the money he is getting from Soros. By all accounts he is an "honest" amnesty enthusiast. His man in charge of immigration reform at the RI was, until two years ago, one Juan Fernandez, who holds dual U.S. and Mexican citizenship and is a former member of Vicente Fox's cabinet in charge of Mexicans abroad. This man believes that anyone of Mexican ancestry, even after going through the motions of becoming an American citizen (as he has done), remains a Mexican forever and should "think Mexican first." Such a one should never contemplate—let alone accept—assimilation as an option. Dr. Fernandez now serves as John McCain's Hispanic Outreach Director and is seen as a potential Cabinet-level appointee in a McCain administration.

McCain's additional overlap with Soros is in Eastern Europe. The Arizona senator broke ranks with his party in March 1999 and voted for Clinton's war against Serbia, which Soros enthusiastically supported directly and through generous donations to the International Crisis Group. The war was illegal, since the House refused to authorize it under the War Powers Act, but McCain was its enthusiastic advocate then and remains a supporter of Kosovo's self-proclaimed independence now.

When it comes to other disputed regions, McCain is firmly in the sovereignist camp—provided that it is anti-Russian. Any post-Soviet frozen conflict area's nominal title-holder—Moldova *vis-à-vis* Transdnistria, or Georgia under the Sorosite Mikheil Saakashvili vis-à-vis Abkhazia or South Ossetia—is in the right, he asserts, and should be supported by the United States in reasserting sovereignty over the rebel provinces, regardless of the wishes of the inhabitants. He condemned a large poster in the South Ossetian capital of Tskhinvali hailing Putin as "our President": "I do not believe that Vladimir Putin is now, or ever should be, the president of sovereign Georgian soil."

No such scruples apply to sovereign Russian soil, however. In December 1999, McCain accused the Clinton administration of turning a blind eye to Russian "crimes" in Chechnya, attacking Russia's "brutal to the extreme" military campaign and announcing that if he were president, he would move to cut off IMF loans to Moscow. "McCain was the first senior American politician to say that what the Russians are doing is genocide," cooed the Washingtonian Russophobe in Chief Zbigniew Brzezinski. "It was a gutsy call, and he called it just right." In the same "gutsy" vein, McCain boasted earlier this year of staring into Putin's eyes and seeing the letters KGB. The difference from 1999 is that, today, Russia is better poised to offer much needed loans to America than the other way round.

China fares hardly better. In 1999, the country's leaders were, in McCain's view, "ruthless defenders" of an "inhumane regime." A decade and a couple trillion dollars in trade deficits later, he is still committed to "keeping pressure" on China "to improve its human rights record."

Elsewhere around the world, mere readiness to talk is a sign of inexcusable weakness to McCain. Last May, he accused Barack Obama of "inexperience and reckless judgment" for saying that, if elected, he would be willing to talk with Iranian leader Mahmoud Ahmadinejad without preconditions during his first year as president. According to McCain, such talks would only embolden "an implacable foe of the United States." He is equally critical

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of Obama's readiness to talk to Raúl Castro of Cuba and Hugo Chávez of Venezuela.

A man that would be seen in a normal country as a dangerous charlatan—at best a dilettante in need of tutoring—has made it so far because the bedlam known as the U.S. foreign-policy community approves of "engagement" abroad and wide-open doors at home. The "community's" impulse is neurotic; its justification, gnostic. It reflects the collective loss of nerve, faith, and identity of a diseased society, producing a self-destructive malaise that is literally unprecedented in history. The intoxication is the arrogant belief, in general, that our reason and our science and our technology can resolve all the dilemmas and challenges of our existence and, in particular, that enlightened abstractions—democracy, human rights, free markets—can be spread across the world and are capable of transforming it into one big Wal-Mart. Both the madness and the intoxication have a "left," Sorosite narrative, and a "right," McCainite one.

John McCain is the most dangerous man in today's America because this likely next occupant of the White House combines a muddled world outlook with an imbalanced personality, limited intelligence, and low character. Like Vladimir Ilich Lenin or Ted Kaczynski, he needs dehumanized adversaries.

McCain's global outlook is virtually identical to that of George Soros. He supports NATO's further expansion into Russia's backyard, not because it would enhance American security but because it would bring us a step closer to a neoliberal globalized world. Addressing the Hoover Institution last year, he called for a "global League of Democracies—one that would have NATO members at its core—dedicated to the defense and advancement of global democratic principles," and he repeated the call in May in his "vision for 2013."

McCain could have copied his one-world idea word for word from the mission statement of the Democracy Coalition Project (*www.demcoalition.org*), a Soros-funded NGO led by two former Clinton White House officials. More remarkably still, there is little if any difference between McCain's "League of Democracies" and the "Concert of Democracies" suggested by Obama's advisors. The League/Concert would be Washington's standing mechanism to circumvent the U.N. Security Council, which throughout the Cold War was the closest approximation of the 19th-century "Concert of Powers" that helped avoid a major European war from Napoleon to 1914.

The identity of the two mind-sets became obvious when Obama's advisor Ivo Daalder and McCain's advisor Robert Kagan coauthored an article in the *Washington Post* supporting the concept. As a former long-serving GOP Senate staffer who knows McCain warns, those who expect that the post-Bush era will mean a return to some kind of normalcy from the current neoconservative fever are sadly mistaken: "Think of the League/Concert as a permanent Iraq 'Coalition of the Willing' on steroids. The conscious goal of such a mechanism would include institutionalized hostility to Russia and China." Come 2013, Iraq really might seem to have been a cakewalk.

A former top Clinton official, Strobe Talbott, praised both McCain and Obama as "moderate pragmatists" in foreign affairs, "with the demonstrated ability to reach across party lines." This is "good news," according to Dr. Talbott—the man who believes that the United States may not last until the end of this century because the very concept of nationhood will have been rendered obsolete, and all states will recognize a single, global authority. The ideological foundation for George Soros's global vision is the same: Nations are social arrangements, artificial, temporary, and dangerous. In John McCain, they both recognize a man who can be manipulated by themselves, or people like themselves, in the service of global goals and political objectives that are contrary to American interests and detrimental to peace in the world.

In 1999, the *Economist* wrote that the United States bestrides the globe like a colossus: "It dominates business, commerce and communications; its economy is the world's most successful, its military might second to none." Less than a decade later, the U.S. economy is structurally weak, and its once-powerful manufacturing base moribund. The financial system is on the verge of collapse, no longer sustainable by dwindling infusions of foreign cash and ever-rising domestic borrowing. Eight years of George W. Bush have taken us further away from the Republic of yore and into a postmodern empire devoid of cohesiveness at home or a credible narrative abroad. Iraq is a disaster that indicates the limits of American power as clearly as the rise of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the demise of the dollar. The military is still second to none, yet barely able to deal with the insurgency in two small faraway lands.

This country's problems are huge, but they are not insoluble. It is as possible and necessary to control the borders at home and to spend no more than is earned as it is possible and necessary to disengage from foreign entanglements that do not contribute to the well-being and security of the United States. It is possible and necessary to establish a realistic balance between ends and means in American foreign and security policy on the basis of the Golden Rule.

John McCain does not understand this because he is obtuse. He will refuse to consider its merits because he is deluded and bellicose. He will not accept any responsibility for the consequences of that refusal because he is morally challenged. Like Napoleon III in 1870, Franz Josef in 1914, or Leonid Brzehnev in 1979, he will try to prop up an ailing empire with reckless diplomatic gambles and military adventures. The results will be similar, or worse.

May God help us all.

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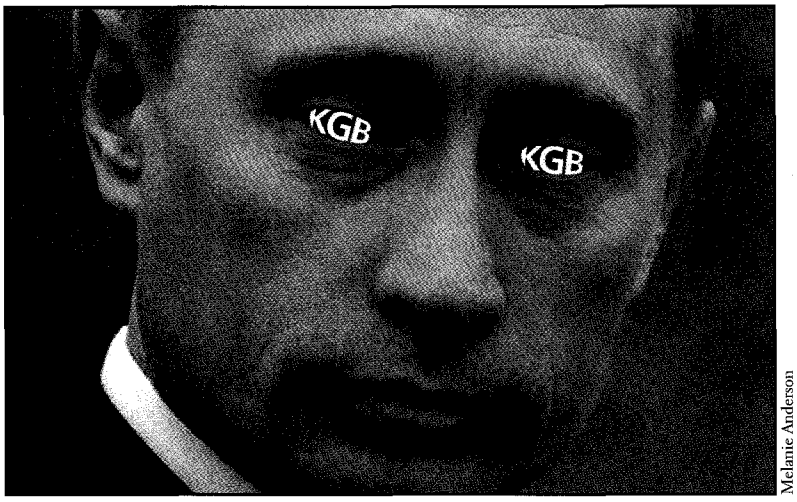
A Case of Russophobia

Putin, Medvedev, and John McCain

by Wayne Allensworth



Melanie Anderson

John McCain does not like the Russians. Nearly 17 years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, with Soviet-style communism safely tossed into the dustbin of history, Senator McCain loves to scare us with the Russkie boogeyman. Take, for example, this excerpt from his "An Enduring Peace Built on Freedom," published in the November/December 2007 issue of *Foreign Affairs*:

> A decade and a half ago, the Russian people threw off the tyranny of communism . . . Today, we see in Russia diminishing political freedoms, a leadership dominated by a clique of former intelligence officers, efforts to bully democratic neighbors, such as Georgia, and attempts to manipulate Europe's dependence on Russian oil and gas. We need a new Western approach to this revanchist Russia. We should start by ensuring that the G-8, the group of eight highly industrialized states, becomes again a club of leading market democracies: it should include Brazil and India but exclude Russia. Rather than tolerate Russia's nuclear blackmail . . . Western nations should make clear that the solidarity of NATO, from the Baltic to the Black Sea, is indivisible and that the organization's doors remain open to all democracies committed to the defense of freedom. We must also increase our programs supporting freedom and the rule of law in Russia.

Mocking President Bush's ludicrous 2001 comment about looking into former Russian president Vladimir Putin's eyes and "getting a sense of his soul," McCain quipped that when he looked into Putin's eyes he saw "three letters—a K, a G, and a B." Russia, according to McCain, has turned into a "KGB oligarchy," dreaming of restoring "the old Russian empire." He further castigated the Russians for cooperating with Iran, particularly in the construction of nuclear facilities. (In May, however, outgoing President Putin said that Russia would join in sanctions against Tehran designed to curb its uranium-enrichment efforts.)

John McCain does not like Russia because she does not share our "basic economic values and principles." To Senator McCain, this is manifested by Russia's strange desire to be the dominant power in her own backyard and to—gasp!—use her own oil and gas resources as levers in political dealings with the West. He has accused the Russians of wanting to "blackmail" the West with her nuclear weapons—a likely reference to former president Putin's predictable saber rattling as NATO sought to expand and Washington planned to position antimissile systems in Eastern Europe—while the White House has expressed a desire to kick Russia out of the G-8. A President McCain would support further NATO expansion and likely interfere in the internal politics of former Soviet republics such as Georgia.

McCain's near-religious zeal for bashing Russia is obviously connected to his neoconservative view of America as a "proposition nation" and his commitment to a global crusade for democracy. As he sees it, "From the American Revolution to the Cold War, Americans have understood

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their duty to serve a cause greater than self interest and to keep faith with the eternal and universal principles of the Declaration of Independence." Thus, he has already clued us in on his possible answers to some obvious questions: *What difference does it make to me and my family who rules Georgia or who dominates the former Soviet Union? Is there a vital interest at stake? If so, what is it?* McCain would likely answer that "Threats to freedom anywhere are threats to our freedom!" (A variant might be "Americans understand that we serve a cause greater than self interest") Yes, Russia has a large nuclear arsenal—so why antagonize the Kremlin unnecessarily?

In his *Foreign Affairs* article, Senator McCain proposed forming what he calls a "League of Democracies" to help with the global crusade he has in mind. "The protection and promotion of the democratic ideal, at home and abroad," he writes, "will be the surest source of security and peace for the century that lies before us." But from outside the Beltway bubble, McCain's globalist agenda looks more like a recipe for insecurity and endless war.

The question remains, however: Why the special dislike for Russia? After all, McCain struck a far more realistic note in his comments on China in that same article:

> China and the United States are not destined to be adversaries. We have numerous overlapping interests. U.S.-Chinese relations can benefit both countries . . . But until China moves toward political liberalization, our relationship will be based on periodically shared interests rather than the bedrock of shared values.

Why, then, can't we have a hard-headed relationship with the Russians based on "periodically shared interests," too? That is a question I am often asked, as I make my living as a specialist on Russian affairs. Since I cannot penetrate the depths of McCain's mind or read the thoughts of the leading neoconservatives, my answer is somewhat speculative. There are a few things that immediately come to mind distinguishing Russia from China in the neocon worldview. First is the marriage between transnational corporations and China as a manufacturing base to penetrate the U.S. market, stuffing Wal-Mart with cheap Chinese merchandise. Such corporations are relentlessly globalist and back a globalist worldview consistent with the neocon agenda. But I doubt that is all there is to it.

Americans, even Beltway globalists who consider the nation and national interests *passé* and love what they call "ethnic" restaurants, tend to view China as something like another planet, inscrutable and distant, somehow less real than Russia, which, as exotic as it is compared with Western Europe, is still understandable. Many Russian elites speak English, some of them better than their American counterparts. And there were all those dissidents who took part in the Cold War struggle, which, to a neocon, was just the beginning of the global crusade for democracy. So Russia seems more accessible, a doable democratic project.

There is something else to consider.

The neocons' strong pro-Israel (to be fair, *pro-Israeli hard-liner*) bias is probably a major part of the anti-Russian line we hear from McCain. Russia sells weapons to Syria and is helping Iran build a nuclear power plant. Meanwhile, the Kremlin opposed the U.S. intervention in Iraq—a move that must have been particularly galling to the neocons, since the Iraq campaign was to be the centerpiece of their Bush II project. McCain, a combative and ill-tempered man, seems to take such disagreements personally, and perhaps some Jewish neocons have inherited a visceral hatred of Russia from ancestors who recalled Cossacks running down relatives in days gone by.

This brings us to (now former) Yukos oil magnate Mikhail Khodorkovsky, imprisoned on tax charges by a former KGB officer who obviously hated his guts. "Khodor" had the nerve to question the president publicly, implying that Putin's cronies were corrupt, which provided an opening for those members of Putin's entourage who coveted Yukos. I will leave aside the other likely motives of the competing parties involved, as the machinations of the various "clans" are too complex to get into here. Suffice it to say that certain parties in the "liberal" camp have steadfastly (though sometimes in a veiled manner) defended Khodorkovsky. Though reportedly a practicing Orthodox Christian, Khodorkovsky is partly of Jewish descent, while the almost exclusively Russian *siloviky*, the veteran and serving officers of the "power ministries" (security and law-enforcement agencies) in Putin's entourage, have been cast as Khodorkovsky's persecutors.

The subtext of the Yukos affair—the Putin regime cracking down on a "Jewish oligarch"—played well politically both in Russia (with certain segments of the electorate) and abroad with those inclined to what Russian nationalists call "Russophobia." What happens to Khodorkovsky in the near future will be seen by many sincere Russian democrats—and plenty of insincere ones—as a sign of how strong certain *siloviky* factions are and of whether they can look forward to a "thaw" under Putin's successor, Dmitri Medvedev. In the West, Khodorkovsky is widely viewed as a political prisoner in the vein of Soviet-era dissidents, a sign of the tightening screws of the "KGB oligarchy" in Russia, and so his fate will serve as a barometer of Medvedev's liberalism in the eyes of Washington as well. Both views are distorted versions of a complex reality; of course, people are interested more often in symbols and political soap operas than in following the complexities of politics in a foreign land, especially one where hall-of-mirrors political games, disinformation, and "clan" politics further obscure that reality. Certainly, it is too much work for Beltway foreign-policy "experts."

A more nuanced understanding of Kremlin politics might bring us closer to a realistic approach to Russia-U.S. relations, one that would be sober and cognizant of real American interests, but undistorted by the reflexive Russophobia of the McCainiac neocons and their uto-

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pian globalist ideology. The best assessment of Russian intentions comes from two sources. The first is former President Putin himself. The second is political analyst-*cum*-provocateur Stanislav Belkovsky, a man who seems to have connections to the *siloviky*, the "fallen oligarchs" of Yukos, and the burgeoning community of anti-Kremlin exiles in London. Since Belkovsky operates in the great Russian tradition of playing both sides of the street, it is worth listening when he speaks, if only to pick up on whatever story line he is selling at the moment.

Vladimir Putin is still a key player in Russian politics. Just one day after his chosen successor Dmitri Medvedev was inaugurated on May 7, Putin was made premier. Back in March, he told reporters that Medvedev is "no less a nationalist" than Putin himself, so the West should find him just as difficult to deal with. Russia would be no less hostile to NATO expansion and no less suspicious of Western support for "color revolutions" (*e.g.* Ukraine's "Orange Revolution" or Georgia's "Rose Revolution") in the former Soviet Union. Moscow would play hard ball on energy politics. (Before his inauguration, Medvedev was chairman of Gazprom, the Russian monopoly that supplies a substantial amount of Europe's natural gas.) During the same press conference, held on the occasion of a visit with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Putin was asked whether Khodorkovsky would be pardoned. "If we suppose that the procedure required by law is observed," he replied, "then the question of pardoning is in the competence of the head of state, the president of the Russian Federation," Putin said. So Putin left open the possibility of a pardon by Medvedev.

Belkovsky has told us what Putin might be up to. According to *Stas*, Putin had several tasks to accomplish during his presidency. He was to protect the interests of the Boris Yeltsin clan known as "The Family," the group chiefly responsible for Putin's rise to power. He was to prevent any "review" of the privatization of the 1990's, meaning that apart from the normal redivisions of property among the ruling clans (Yukos was largely absorbed by state-controlled oil giant Rosneft following Khodorkovsky's arrest), there would no full-scale renationalization. And finally, he was to ensure the legalization and legitimization in the eyes of the West of the property and cash accumulated by the Russian ruling class. The first two tasks have been accomplished, but the last one is dicey. And Russian money wants a place to go.

Thanks to skyrocketing oil prices and the sale of high-priced aluminum and other exports, Russia's billionaires in both the private and the public sectors have lots of money and want to buy stuff. Being careful people, they would prefer not to invest the bulk of their holdings in Russia. And they want to sell shares in their assets to the West, as well as preserve their mansions and bank accounts abroad. After all, does anyone expect them to buy a villa in China or Iran? Vacationing in the Swiss Alps or the Mediterranean beats the pants off the Urals or the Black Sea coast. Elite British schools are full of their children. They want to be accepted in the West and to be able to travel freely, a luxury they do not currently enjoy. Russia's current "Oligarch No. 1," Oleg Deripaska, for instance, is barred from entering the United States because of his alleged organized-crime connections. And Gazprom wants to sell shares on the New York Stock Exchange. These help to explain the hints about pardoning Khodorkovsky and the "liberal" image that is being cultivated for Medvedev.

McCain has his own take on Medvedev's inauguration:

> President Medvedev pledged that his greatest duty would be to develop civil and economic freedom for the Russian people. I welcome this pledge and hope President Medvedev will soon begin restoring and strengthening the institutions of democracy, including a free press and the rights of a vibrant Russian political opposition to express its views and run for office. That is what the Russian people want and deserve, and it is also what we want for Russia. I also hope President Medvedev will take steps to ease tensions with Georgia by reversing recently announced measures that undermine Georgia's internationally-recognized sovereignty which have rightly caused great concern among our European allies.

The Kremlin has no intention of allowing free rein to a "fallen oligarch"-backed political opposition or of shutting up about protecting its position in the former Soviet empire. Thus, McCain's hostile attitude is not likely to soften even if Khodorkovsky is pardoned. Anything short of a "color revolution" in Russia will be seen as a defeat by the neocons who influence him. And McCain seems to be a man who needs enemies. Unfortunately, both of his potential opponents, Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama, worship at the same globalist shrine, though neither is so openly hostile toward Russia.

The last thing the United States needs is to get into a conflict with a nuclear-armed Russia when there is no vital U.S. interest involved, especially when Washington already has us bogged down in two wars. A more realistic approach would be to view Russia as a potential partner on some fronts (energy sales, combating Islamic terrorism), while soberly recognizing Moscow for what it is—another oligarchy like so many others in the world run by "clans" and Corleone-style "families." We can do business with the Russians, while keeping one hand on our wallet and restricting the Russian gangster businessmen from further infiltrating our country and economy. Their strong desire to be accepted by the West and to sell us their resources and products gives us bargaining chips in dealing with the Kremlin. *Pace* John McCain and his neoconservative advisors, there is no good reason for fomenting a clash with Russia, just as there is no good reason for allowing yet another group of shady foreigners to establish a beachhead in our country. ◁

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The Fortune Teller

An Excerpt From *Mexico Way*

by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

Melanie Anderson

"I don't want to be married any longer."

"What does that mean?"

"What I said."

"You don't love me."

"I don't love anybody."

"You loved me. Or said you did."

"Nobody's responsible for what they said twenty-five years ago."

"I love you."

"I wish you wouldn't."

"Am I so tough to get along with?"

"Not tough."

"What then?"

"I think you are the most boring human being I've known ever, in my entire life. But that isn't the reason why I'm going to leave you."

"What is the reason?"

"I don't want to be married any longer."

Two weeks before his wife announced her intention to sue for divorce and ten days before she moved out leaving him the furniture, the toy poodle, her wedding dress, and several pairs of worn-out shoes at the back of the closet, Samuel Adams White, retired inspector with the United States Customs Bureau, had returned from a trip to Wyoming where he'd signed the closing papers on a forty-acre ranchette. The property, a yellow log house built twelve years before from a kit and surrounded by a buck-and-pole fence enclosing a sagebrush meadow stretching below stony peaks streaked with snow, was meant to realize a dream conceived by the inspector as a boy of fourteen when his father had taken him to see *The Virginian* at the moving-picture cinema in Spring Valley, in those days a dusty farm town of a few thousand people drowsing in the California sun fifteen miles east of San Diego. After quitting the realtor's office the inspector had walked down the main street where late-season skiers gawked before the false fronts of the frame buildings and entered a western-wear store, where he purchased blue jeans, three candy-striped shirts with yoked shoulders and pearly snap-buttons, a canvas duster that reached below his ankles when the buttoned hem was dropped, a pair of tooled boots with undershot heels, and a broad silver-belly hat with a curled brim and a silver ribbon circling the base of the crown. Next he'd driven in the rental car to visit the local horse-trader recommended by the realtor, with whom he left a one-thousand-dollar deposit on two quarter-horses and a pair of well-used roping saddles the trader happened to have on the place. The inspector was reconciled to writing off the horses, but hoped to rent out the property for the summer until he could make up his mind what he wanted to do with it in the long run. Wyoming, the ranch, horses—they belonged to the dream from which he'd awakened not to reality but into limbo. Faced by the destruction of the new life even before it commenced, the inspector had seized on the spectral form of the old one before it could evanesce. Back in Nogales now, he drifted like a ghost among scenes familiar

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Chilton Williamson, Jr., is Chronicles' *senior editor for books. This story is an excerpt from Part One of his new novel,* Mexico Way *(Chronicles Press).*

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to him from nearly thirty years of his professional and personal life, waiting to assume corporeal form among the flesh-and-blood shapes that jostled and sweated in the heat of the desert spring, although six weeks had passed already since his return to Arizona and Gloria's departure for California.

The turnstile spun silently in its barred cylinder as pedestrians passed back and forth between two sovereign nations, staring at the broken concrete pavement as if they'd dropped a dime or peso there. Once beyond the gate the Americans walked away briskly in the direction of the agencia de turista, while the Mexicans, losing their momentum rapidly, eddied against the high concrete wall where they stood watching their compatriots follow them through the turnstile. Beyond the auto checkpoint, traffic from Mexico was backed up under rusty palm trees as far as the bazaars where street vendors hawked rugs, leather goods, and trinkets in the sour-smelling calles between the drab gray buildings. On the plaza before a small gray church, two men with machetes on a stepladder hacked branches from a tree above the head of a Tarahumara woman squatted with her three children on the pavement as she attempted selling Chiclets to the tourists. Dirt streets descended precipitously among barrios strewn with garbage and prickly pear cactus on the two sides of the cañon forming a vent through which a southwesterly breeze carried the odor of mesquite fires, blending with a haze of leaded petrol fumes. Beyond the narrow pass in which the old town of Nogales, Sonora, stood, a vast metropolis of plywood and cardboard shacks, populated by several hundred thousand migrants and refugees arrived from the south in hope of entering the United States, spread itself over the plain that lay behind the hills. The inspector, after three decades, had never strayed beyond the twelve-mile limit past which the carta de turista was required of all foreigners, nor had he any intention of ever doing so. Marooned on the concrete island between opposing traffic flows, he held the poodle on a tight leash as a southbound station wagon, crowded with college students on spring break from the university in Tucson, eased by him. For thirty years the inspector had listened to the tales told by tourists returning ashen-faced from Mexico: hair-raising stories of ambushes by armed bandits, pursuing lorries filled with men in anonymous fatigues and wielding automatic rifles, minor auto accidents resulting in the arrest of American citizens who were promptly thrown into prison and never heard from by their families again. He'd never been able to comprehend what reason or business Americans had to go traveling abroad in foreign countries, where history clung with pervasive tendrils like some poisonous tropical vine and where the God of nations still refused to show His face.

The dog strained forward from his knee, and the inspector stepped off the island and crossed among the cars halted in the southbound lane toward the loitering Mexicans who, as it seemed to him, gauged his approach with feral eyes. Familiarity had left him mostly indifferent to the Mexican people, but indifference in his case was not exactly neutrality. For the first time in many weeks the inspector was aware of himself as an object of human attention. Approaching the sidewalk he drew the poodle against his leg and for the next several blocks held her tight above the collar as they passed by the Mayoreo y Menudeo stores with their trays of cheap goods—flip-flops and tennis shoes and cowboy shirts and hats—obtruding onto the sidewalk to be picked over by Mexican nationals carrying stuffed shopping bags through a blare of Latin music. He took close hold again a block farther on as, beneath a retaining wall rising to the tall stuccoed church on the hill above the street, an Hispanic woman came toward them guided by a German shepherd in a leather harness. At the precise moment that she passed before the stone steps going up to the church the woman crossed herself, proceeding past the inspector with the blank, oblivious, otherworldly stare of the totally blind. As far as the end of the block he wondered how she'd known with such accuracy when she reached the church steps.

The walk was part of a daily routine by which he expected to reenter the familiar rut that would guide him unswervingly for the rest of his life, though at present, rather than walking, he felt himself to be floating above it all like a moonwalker. Around a curve in the street the inspector caught sight of the hotel, a wide building of white painted brick surrounded by palm trees and fronted by an expanse of tarmac crowded with expensive cars. Here tourists and retirees from the north joined the prosperous local businessmen of the city who lunched daily in the restaurant and the lovely, leisured Latin women lingering in the cocktail lounge adjoining it. It was the inspector's custom to buy the morning paper in the lobby and read the news over breakfast in the air-conditioned dining room where, in spite of the many years he'd lived in Nogales, he knew hardly anyone to speak to beyond the retired import man who would repeat over and over the history of the produce business in Sonora and whose name the inspector was usually unable to recall.

After breakfast and the paper, the inspector returned to the rented bungalow (his house, already on the market, was confidently expected by the real-estate broker to sell within weeks) where he worked crossword puzzles and read until noon, when he took the dog for a briefer walk in the midday heat. He read the works of Zane Grey, Jack Schaefer, and Walter van Tilburn Clark, but Louis L'Amour's were his particular favorites. In these books the inspector recognized the America his father, a San Diego police officer, had taught him in his boyhood and in which he'd lost neither faith nor belief since: an America that won its battles, solved its problems, brought enlightenment and progress to the world, and had God on its side. By one o'clock the house, thick-walled and shaded by palm trees but equipped only with a swamp cooler, had become unpleasantly warm, and the inspector drove to a truck stop on the edge of town for lunch. Because Mexi-

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can or any kind of spicy food hurt his stomach, he invariably ordered a cheeseburger, french-fried potatoes, and a milkshake. After leaving the restaurant the inspector stopped by the supermarket for the few things he needed for his supper and a can of horse meat for the dog, and by three he was home again rereading Louis L'Amour, who being deceased was no longer writing books. At five he mixed and drank two gin and tonics, put a frozen dinner in the microwave oven, and ate his supper in the kitchen while doves called softly from the rooftops and wide Mexican women perambulated with their broods along the narrow sidewalk.

The house was fractured adobe covered by a tin roof on which the palm fronds clashed restlessly, fronted by a porch of warped planks at a second remove from the street above a concrete retaining wall surmounted by an iron fence and located in an old and seedy neighborhood inhabited mostly by Mexican and American hippies. In the second week of his occupancy the inspector had discovered a five-ounce packet of marijuana when he tripped and almost fell over a loose board in the hallway, but the deputy sent by the sheriff's department to take possession of the packet seemed unimpressed. The previous tenants, he explained, had been suspected of receiving smuggled drugs. However, the county lacked sufficient evidence on which to arrest them. The property was run-down and dirty enough that the inspector felt no shame for the lax housekeeping standards he'd allowed to replace a lifelong standard of cleanliness and military order.

Every evening after supper the inspector put the dog in the car and drove north on the interstate to an exit leading into a two-lane road that shortly became a dirt track climbing west into hills covered by Johnsongrass, live oak, and yucca and surmounted by red battlements of volcanic rock mottled with green lichen. Some miles beyond the pavement's end he stopped the car, let the dog out, and threw sticks for her to retrieve while he walked slowly in his new cowboy clothes over the thin grass growing among the cholla, watching the sun drop toward the steep black canyons cutting up from Mexico. They returned to the bungalow before dark, and the inspector, after locking the doors, securing the window fastenings, and changing into his dressing gown, worked another crossword and was in bed by ten o'clock. Since he'd neglected to have a telephone installed in the house, he was never disturbed by callers.

Returning from the hills somewhat later than usual one evening, the inspector spied through the dusk an indistinct figure on the sidewalk beside the iron gate, which he saw had been pushed partway open. He parked the car against the curb and stepped out, shutting the door against the dog who sat up on the front seat growling and showing her teeth through the windshield. The woman was small and dark, with a wide Mexican face. She wore a pale blue dress with a colorful Indian shawl over it.

"You are Señor Wilson?"

"No I'm not."

"You live here?"

"Yes."

Pinned by the car lights like a butterfly on velvet, she seemed confused. "Will the dog bite?" the woman asked.

"Not if I don't let her out of the car."

"I come twice now," she explained, "looking for Señor Wilson."

"He used to live here?"

"Yes, Señor."

"Then my guess is he's probably in jail." Watching her closely, the inspector thought he observed her mouth tighten at the corners as he spoke. "You had business with this fellow Wilson?"

"I am a fortune-teller," the woman said, and he could see her mind working rapidly behind her eyes. "For Señor Wilson only five dollar. For you also, five dollar."

"I don't believe in superstition."

"For the alcalde in Nogales, twenty-five dollar. I have many wealthy clients in México."

"You have much business on the American side also?"

"Oh very."

The inspector reluctantly extended his hand. "All right then."

The woman glanced nervously at the car, from which snarling sounds continued to come. "What about the dog?" she asked.

"She'll be okay until we're through."

"She is your special friend—yes?"

"I suppose she is."

"I will hurry," the woman promised, "so she will not be left alone for very long."

As she bent above his palm, the inspector looked over her head and up the street for the car he expected to see waiting in the darkness. "The lifeline is good," she said approvingly, "very deep and long. You have had a happy life already?"

"Average, I'd say."

"Your wife is no longer with you."

"We split the sheets last month."

"I do not understand."

"We were divorced in March."

"I am very sorry."

"I'm not."

"Perhaps you will meet somebody new in your travels."

"I don't like to travel." He wondered if she would suspect his motive if he suggested they continue the reading in the house.

"But you enjoy to travel in México, yes?"

"I've never been down there."

"Ah Señor, but you will go. Soon!"

"I doubt it."

"I see a trip," the woman insisted. "I see a long trip. México is very nice place for the Americans, señor. I am sure you will enjoy very, very much. There is very much to see in México."

"I don't have money to pay for a trip now."

"Is very cheap for the Americans to live in México—al-

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most like you are our guest. Give your hand again, please, the reading is not over yet."

The inspector considered as she continued to pore over his hand, reciting her grave nonsense. Supposing that he found a pretext to detain her, on what ground would he be justified in summoning a law officer? Anyway he had no telephone. Though a pretty woman still, she had the worn look common to poor Mexican women past the age of twenty-five. He imagined her living in a shack of cardboard or sheet iron, warming herself and a large family at a mesquite fire and sleeping in a plastic bag on a hard dirt floor. The real mystery of her dark homeland was the ability of the human spirit to survive there at all—insofar as it *did* survive, he thought. The inspector felt relief as she finished the reading. He was retired now. What came and went across the border was no longer any business of his. He took five dollars from his wallet. The woman folded the bill into a tiny square and deposited it in a change purse she took from under her shawl. "Señor Wilson was your friend?" she inquired.

"He was not."

"So interested in the occult. A good customer of mine, very."

"I wouldn't be surprised if he was." The thought occurred to him that Wilson might have been purchasing something in addition to marijuana and fortune-telling. She was just pretty enough, and apparently competitive in her pricing.

"So many customers to see tonight," the woman told him, replacing the purse under her shawl. "Your friend, she cry for you. Muchas gracias, señor."

His interest dwindled with her receding figure as it blurred into darkness beyond the headlights' reach, but he watched it out of sight before returning to the car where he released the panting, yapping dog, which leaped from the seat and ran her leash out, jumping and twisting like a fish on the line. "Shut up, Darlene," the inspector said, and gave the chain a hard tug. "She isn't your worry, or mine either."

At age fifty-three the inspector was beginning to understand that what people call life is actually a sequence of lives, each separated by a small death after which the soul exists for a time in limbo before moving into and taking up the new life. How long this limbo lasted he had no idea. While hoping that it might end soon, he was unable to imagine the contours of the life to follow, as he felt incapable of summoning the energy to embrace it when it finally arrived. For the present lassitude wrapped him like a shroud in which, though hating it, he was nevertheless content to lie.

The heat was partly responsible, he believed. He'd never given a thought to temperature before, driving to work and back in an air-conditioned car, sitting all day in the manufactured blast of the cooling outlets. Now, though it was only the beginning of April, he was continuously aware of the white caloric glare of the sun emanating from a galvanized sky. When the swamp cooler broke down and the landlord was unable to get a repairman to fix it immediately, he began waking at five to read in the cool of the pre-dawn morning, napping through the midday, and lying awake until nearly midnight with the front door ajar on the latch and the windows open to thresh the cooling air passing stealthily in the darkness out of Mexico. Although he considered taking the house off the market and moving into it again, he gave up the idea for good after driving past the place one evening with the dog. The sight of the home he'd shared with his wife for thirty years gave him an appalling sensation of viewing his own mausoleum.

As the spring days lengthened in the premature heat, the inspector took to whistling up the dog at the conclusion of his siesta and heading immediately into the hills where he remained until evening and returned after dark, navigating the narrow trail with headlights set at high beam through clouds of flitting insects while the dog snapped at moths crawling on the inside of the car windows. Although more people were arriving to camp on the live-oak ridges and in the canopied creek bottoms, the little traffic on the road was mostly pickup trucks trailering bulls and saddle horses, ancient Mexican sedans bottoming out in the washes, and the pale-green four-wheel-drive vehicles of the Border Patrol looking to intercept mules backpacking their contraband through the steep canyons cutting north from Mexico. The patrol agents, well acquainted with the inspector, saluted him as they passed and often stopped to ask whether he had noticed anything suspicious along the road.

Headed for the freeway one afternoon the inspector stopped at the supermarket where, along with horsemeat, he bought a can of corned-beef hash, a loaf of bread, a pint bottle of whiskey, and matches. He hadn't camped since his days as a Boy Scout from which he'd learned little about the out-of-doors and forgotten most of that little, but this day the insufferable closeness of the adobe house spurred him to something like adventure. As a substitute for a tent and sleeping bag he carried an Army blanket to spread on the back seat of the car, and he recalled having seen much dry wood lying about under the live oaks. Somewhat intimidated by his own boldness, the inspector assured himself that if the night air grew intolerably chill he could be back safe in town again within the hour. And he had Darlene for protection.

The produce sheds at the north end of the city were silent, awaiting the midnight arrival of fruits and vegetables from Sonora in transit to the greengrocer markets of Tucson, Phoenix, and Flagstaff. Off in the hills feathered with mesquite and on the graveled alluvial fans spreading out from the mountains, vacation homes for snowbirds escaping the snows of Kansas City and Minneapolis were going up beside ranchettes owned by locals fleeing the crime and congestion of a Mexican-American border town. The inspector also felt the need to escape. He left the freeway and continued west through the low steepsided hills gripped by single-story ranch houses surrounded by sat-

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ellite dishes, horse corrals, and power boats berthed on tow trailers and covered by a patina of the red desert soil. Shortly before the pavement ended he passed a turnoff to the man-made lake that, in thirty years, he'd never once visited, nor thought to.

The inspector drove for twenty minutes against the steep beneath the sandstone battlements before he reached the familiar meadow, where he steered the car across hummocks of salt-grass and prickly pear to the edge of a live-oak stand. He let the dog out to run in circles with her nose to the ground and trailing her leash and brought out the supper things, which he placed carefully under the trees on a patch of bare ground. The afternoon heat had subsided, and already a light breeze flowed down from the broken pinnacles of rock. Keeping a close eye on the dog, the inspector gathered chunks of sandstone lying scattered around and placed them in a fire ring. Only after he'd begun to sweat from the effort did he realize he'd neglected to bring water and an ice cooler from town.

Yucca bloomed on the steep slopes, the pale clustered flowers exuding a sweet perfume from the tips of graceful stalks the height of a man, and higher. The inspector walked among them, dislodging rocks from the pressed beds that exactly fitted them and brushing the ants and cocoons from the undersides. When he'd gathered nearly enough rocks, he was out of breath and his hands were chafed and sore. Returning to a rock pile he had discovered, he bent and lifted a red flat slab. The deadly buzzing commenced as he began to raise the rock, and before his brain could signal his hands to drop it he'd uncovered the whole of the coiled snake colored a motley brownish color, with a forked black tongue and diamond yellow eyes. The inspector staggered backward clawing behind himself, tripped over another rock, and turned a reverse somersault in the grass. He felt himself already up and running as he untangled his limbs, looking back over his shoulder as if he feared the snake were pursuing him. He kept running, and Darlene came gamboling from another direction and followed him back to camp with the leg of a Coues deer in her mouth for him to toss.

They ate, he and the dog, as the sun, a fire encased in a globe of red glass, sank through the evening haze among the sinister bergs of Mexico and brightened the fortress of sandstone above them to the redness of blood. The inspector sat on the backseat of the car with the door open and his feet in the grass to eat while Darlene, tied to the trunk of a live oak, bolted horsemeat from the flat rock he'd set out for her for a plate. With the suddenness of a wall switch the sun shut off the lingering warmth and the desert cold struck, causing the inspector to reach for his jacket and pour himself a second drink. Perhaps, he thought, the blanket would not after all be sufficient until morning.

Night followed quickly. In the darkness the inspector could find nothing further to do. He satisfied himself that the fire was out, untied the dog, and signaled her onto the front seat. Under the dome light, he read Louis L'Amour until he developed a crick in his neck. Then he closed the book and went and urinated at a short distance from the car. Since before supper no traffic had passed on the road, and the stony wilderness around him was sunk in a profound gloom unrelieved by any human sound.

Somewhere an owl called and was answered by another and from the opposite side of the canyon a pack of coyotes broke into an insane cacophony of whoops and barks, causing the inspector to shiver beneath the thin blanket before, all at once, he fell asleep.

He awakened instantly and completely, almost in anticipation of the dog whose frantic barking he confused at first with that of the coyotes. The inspector threw off the blanket and lunged across the seat back for the glove compartment before recalling that he'd taken the pistol into the house to clean it several evenings ago, and forgotten to put it back. Now faces pressed dimly behind the window glass. They came at him from both sides of the car, and from the corner of his eye he saw the dog snatched up and her neck wrung like a chicken's. The blanket he had tossed away came back at him and slapped him across the face, wet and laden with a sweet overpowering smell that watered his eyes and agonized his nose and throat. For several moments he continued to struggle against the smell. Then, satisfied that danger had passed, he relaxed and succumbed gratefully to sleep again. ◁

On The Anniversary of a Natural Disaster

by Jennifer Reeser

I found an infant alligator floating
in Perkins' Bayou yesterday, between
Louisiana iris and the green
of blighted summer reeds, its stomach bloating
with harsh, bright, glaring sunlight, without fault
or scale, as crocodiles would have; its head
chin up and oblong, grimacing, as dead
as mausoleum marble, white as salt.
Delight in a discovery so exotic
could not be lost on me, however grim.
Mosquito larvae harbored in a scrim
of water on the western bank, hypnotic
and circling with the rise-and-falling rasp
of locusts at the cypress. In my grasp
a camera—in the case some killer storm
destroys this haunt tomorrow, everything
familiar, safe, replaced by suffering—
chaos projecting fatally through form.

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by Taki Theodoracopulos

Art in the Loo

Christie's, the auction house, took a full-page ad in the *New York Times* to publicize the record sale of a painting by a living artist, Lucian Freud, to the tune of $33.6 million. Thirty-three million greenbacks for a portrait of a horribly fat woman lying naked on a misshapen sofa. The mind reels. It is a dreadful painting, but it does tell us something about the corrupting power of money and one man's contempt for the female sex.

Lucian Freud is not a sympathetic character. I have met him twice, and he is thoroughly unpleasant, an 86-year-old man who specializes in picking up young, impressionable women and making lotsa moolah with his relentlessly drab, ugly, and static paintings. The horrid images of the human body that he specializes in reflect his subjects: old, fat, ugly men and women. The modern hucksters who run the art world have declared Freud a genius, but in my not so humble opinion, he is nothing of the kind. He is a very minor painter who has never evolved from all the flaws of drawing and construction, using tricks, quirks, and mannerisms to hide his lack of talent.

Freud was born in Berlin in 1922, the grandson of that other fraud, Sigmund, and came to England in 1933. His brother Clement, an ex-member of Parliament, and he have not spoken for years, which in a way makes me like Clement, a man I know better than Lucian although he, too, can be quite unpleasant. I suppose unpleasantness runs in the family, but let's not get Freudian about it.

Lucian Freud has to be among the worst draftsmen ever, disguising his artistic flaws by pouring the paint on ugly and contorted female nudes and even uglier male pachyderms. Sorry, but now I *will* get Freudian. Whenever I see one of his deplorable paintings, I can't help but think that it must have been executed by someone who hates the human race. And he gets worse as he gets older. As his hatred of people and his prices grow, so does his peculiar obsession with the paint. He pours it on as if trying to obliterate his subjects. But enough of Freudianisms.

The sad truth is that Freud is an emblem of our times. The art world is in the forefront of the dumbing down of our culture, along with movies, rap music and the lewdness of language in the novel. Money, of course, is what the art world is all about. How, otherwise, can one explain the success of such phonies as Damian Hirst or Tracey Emin? Behind all the modern crap that passes for art nowadays is Mr. Big, the marketing expert and advertising executive Charles Saatchi. Saatchi is an Englishman of Mitteleuropa extraction, a man who began collecting conceptual art for its shock value. Remember the brouhaha in Brooklyn some years ago and the painting that insulted the Virgin Mary? Rudy Giuliani managed to shut it down, but Saatchi got his pound of flesh during the controversy surrounding the exhibition. His collection skyrocketed in value. Headlines bring in the loot. Saatchi knows only too well that the contemporary-art-collecting scene is not dominated by aesthetes or students of the beautiful, but by investment bankers and businessmen who want to buy into a lucrative market.

Freud is also aware of this, and although his style is not conceptual, his representational "art" plows on in his essays of hatred and his fleshy advertisements of how much he hates the human race. Of course there is room for the dark side of human nature. Goya and Picasso have made sure of it, as did many other great artists of the past. But it's Freud's repetitive and self-indulgent canvasses selling for millions that somehow rub me the wrong way. Sue Tilley, the model

for the picture that sold for more than 33 million big ones, was paid 6 dollars an hour to pose for Freud. In real life she is hardly a beauty, but a pleasantly plump lady of some 60 years of age who has not paid attention to her diet. In the Freud picture, the artist dwells upon flab and folds with sadistic contempt for his subject. Morally, the work is worthless.

So there you have it. We live on a visual junk diet of soaps, smut, and vulgar language, and the most expensive painting by a living artist turns out to be as ugly and as disheartening as a porno shop on a rainy Sunday night. Why are we allowing our society to be shaped by the lowest standards of decency and by the nastiest people? I think I know who the latter are, but if I wrote it I'd be accused of things I am not guilty of. The love of money is of course first and foremost. It is the insanity of our money-worshiping age. It is the lack of education, the lack of civic responsibility, the lack of moral seriousness by our leaders, the lack of restraint by so-called freedom-loving shysters and defenders of the First Amendment, and many, many other things.

It is too depressing for words, hence I leave you with the following depressing scene that took place many years ago in London. It was a glittering ball given by an aristocratic family. We were some four friends, all young, and hiding in the loo in order to take drugs. I saw a man's head rise above the separation. It was Lucian Freud. He looked fascinated. I screamed for him to scram, and he did. Is it any wonder he paints the way he does? ◇

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The Forgotten Ideology

by Tom Piatak

"Socialism will bring in an efflorescence of morality, civilization, and science such as has never been seen in the history of the world."
—Ferdinand Lassalle

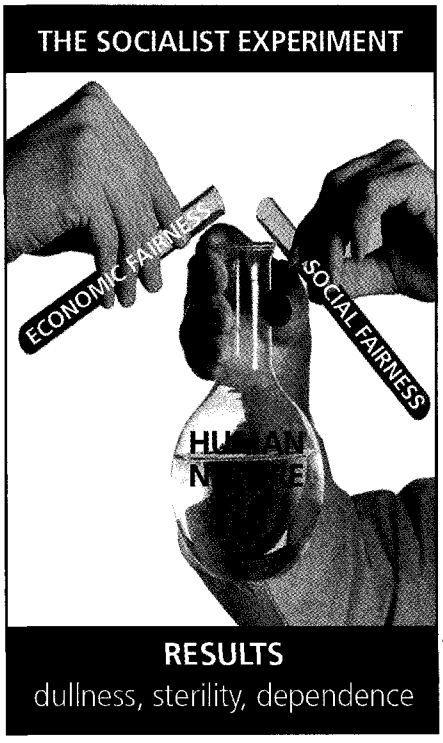
Socialism
by Thomas Fleming
Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish Benchmark; 144 pp., $39.93

◈

Modern American conservatism has been marked by a fascination with ideology. Despite arguments that conservatism is not an ideology or is opposed to all ideology, American conservatives have regularly attempted to systematize their own beliefs. Moreover, they have often attempted to define themselves by reference to ideologies they oppose. Opposition to Soviet communism played a major role in uniting conservatives of many different varieties throughout the Cold War. More recently, neoconservative apparatchiks such as Norman Podhoretz, Victor Davis Hanson, and Christopher Hitchens have sought to portray President George W. Bush's "War on Terror" as part of a protracted global struggle against "Islamofascism," and Jonah Goldberg has made a bid to become the conservative movement's Mikhail Suslov by spending four years writing a book arguing that "fascism" is the intellectual taproot of American liberalism.

Somewhat overlooked in all of this has been the ideology that has enjoyed the most political success in the modern era: socialism, the object of this enjoyable study by Thomas Fleming.

Tom Piatak writes from Cleveland, Ohio.



Melanie Anderson

The reader of a book as brief as this will hardly learn all there is to know about socialism, but he will encounter a thoughtful overview of this important subject, from such forerunners as Plato, Christian millenarians, and Enlightenment philosophes down to the present day. What is more, he will encounter an original thinker and witty writer. Any book that contains such lines as "Rousseau had a very high regard for freedom, especially his own" and "The Fabians may have believed in economic and social equality, but they refused to abandon their belief in the superiority of intellectuals" is well worth the read.

Fleming describes Sir William Harcourt's observation that "We are all socialists now" as "an accurate, if somewhat extreme, description of all the major parties of Europe and the Americas." Despite the dismal failure of avowedly socialist parties in America, Fleming notes that American socialist Norman Thomas "lived long enough to see most of his socialist policies enacted by Democrats and Republicans." Citing such facts as the inflation-adjusted 500-percent increase in government spending on education over the last four decades, and the federal government's ownership of 28 percent of all land in America, Fleming argues that "the United States has developed its own tradition of democratic socialism, but rarely under that name." Indeed, as Fleming notes, in the United States "socialist parties have always been misleadingly described as 'liberal.'" The ideology undergirding American liberalism is in fact socialism, not "fascism," a defunct left-right hybrid that combined "a belief in the nation and its traditions" with domestic policies that were "primarily socialist." A "belief in the nation and its traditions" is markedly absent from the rhetoric of many American liberals, which is the major reason the Democratic Party has been at a disadvantage in so many recent electoral contests. Indeed, the leading contender (as of this writing) for the Democratic nomination, Barack Obama, has a wife who did not feel pride in America until her husband began winning primaries and a minister who prefers "God damn America" to "God bless America."

Fleming sees the essence of socialism as egalitarianism—an emphasis

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on "the duty of society to ensure social and economic fairness and equality." This is both socialism's greatest strength and its greatest weakness. It is socialism's greatest strength because the enduring inequality that is part of the human condition means that "the socialist revolution will never run out of enemies." The persistence of inequality explains the "protean" nature of socialism and why "there are an almost infinite variety of socialist experiments." Conversely, human nature means that socialism's vision will never succeed: "Ever since Plato's time, socialist theorists have had to wrestle with the fact that human nature may not be up to the demands put on it in an ideal society." The desire to create the perfect society by eliminating the imperfect led to the greatest blot on the Marxist record, the unequaled mass murder that accompanied communism. But the reality of human nature means that even peaceful socialist experiments will inevitably end in disappointment and failure.

The initial focus of socialism was on economics, and socialism has certainly had a profound impact on economic life around the world. Every major industrialized nation has some form of governmental safety net, and Fleming observes that "some aspects of socialism . . . are probably inevitable in the vast countries and complex economies created by liberals and nationalists over the centuries." But too much taxation and regulation kills economic initiative, and these days not many socialists are calling for nationalized industry and central planning. As an example of the dead end to which socialist economics leads, Fleming cites Sweden, where in the mid-70's Ingmar Bergman was being taxed at a rate of 139 percent. By the 1980's, inflation in Sweden was twice the European average, growth and productivity were stagnant, and taxes represented 55.3 percent—and government debt, 75 percent—of GNP. Even the enthusiastically socialist Swedes felt the need to cut back on spending and taxes, and by 2005 government debt had dropped to 52 percent of the GNP. Of course, far more dramatic departures from socialism occurred elsewhere, and the "1980s witnessed a virtual free market revolution" with the ascendancy of Reagan, Thatcher, Chirac, and Kohl. The end result has been something of a stalemate, with none of these figures enjoying "major success in slowing, much less reversing, the moral and social revolution that had taken place," but with their socialist opponents emerging from the 1980's having accepted the "proposition that the market should be allowed to operate within more or less strict limits."

If the socialist revolution has arrived at something of an impasse in the economic arena, it has been making great advances on other fronts—in the culture, in the family, and in its war against the nation-state. Fleming rightly sees Antonio Gramsci, who died in one of Mussolini's prisons, as "one of the most influential socialist thinkers of the twentieth century," and the "long march through the institutions" to which he gave birth has been spectacularly successful in turning the culture-forming institutions of the West toward the left. In America, the Gramscian revolution was carried out under the auspices of members of the Frankfurt School such as Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, who fled Hitler to ensconce themselves at the New York School for Social Research. The Frankfurt School was the intellectual wellspring of the New Left of the 1960's, which has gradually succeeded in undermining traditional morality and habits of thought in the United States.

Cultural leftism hardly began in the 60's, though. The Marxist left has, from its inception, been hostile to both the family and the nation-state. Engels "saw the traditional family as oppressive," and "there has been a strong tendency in socialist thinkers . . . to deny legitimacy to the institutions of marriage and family and celebrate sexual freedom." Gunnar and Alva Myrdal campaigned in the 1930's for "aggressive sex education for all children" and "legal contraception and abortion to liberate women from childbearing." The Myrdals' vision now holds sway throughout the Western world. Marx called "for the end of the nation-state" with the "ultimate goal, already anticipated by the Communist Manifesto, of world government." Although we are not there yet, NAFTA and GATT have served to undermine American sovereignty, and many of the same forces that helped push us into those supranational compacts are now pushing for a North American Union modeled after the European Union. Interestingly, many of the strongest proponents of NAFTA and GATT were not socialists at all, but classical liberals.

One of the great strengths of Fleming's book is that it demonstrates that, in spite of the important contributions by such seminal figures as Friedrich Hayek to the critique of socialism, classical liberalism remains an uneven opponent of socialism—and is sometimes even a kindred spirit. Fleming cites German socialist Eduard Bernstein, who

> understood that socialism, rather than being in conflict with basic liberal principles, could be seen as an extension of them. Liberals had worked to end restrictions imposed by religion and aristocracy. What remained was to end the oppression based on wealth, and this could only be done by gradual and democratic means.

Those who follow John Stuart Mill's dictum that "the despotism of custom is everywhere the standing hindrance to human advancement" are, at best, unreliable defenders of such prime targets of cultural Marxism as the family, tradition, and religion. Indeed, hostility to tradition was the animating spirit behind the destructive work of Gramscian Marxists in both America and Europe. And many of those who claim to draw on the classical-liberal tradition, such as the editors of *Reason*, are unremittingly hostile to traditional morality. Fleming's critique of classical liberalism extends even to the cornerstone of Austrian economics, the subjective theory of value, which Fleming sees as mistaken

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because "most individual preferences are determined not by individuals but by families, friends, communities, social fashions, and local and national traditions."

If classical liberals are unreliable opponents of cultural Marxism, they are full-fledged allies in the Marxist war against the nation-state. Marx and Engels saw free trade as the first step toward the elimination of the nation-state, an insight shared by liberal thinker Frédéric Bastiat, who wrote that free trade would lead to the "peaceful, ecumenical, and indissoluble union of the peoples of the world." Fleming offers this revealing quote from Hayek to illustrate the classical liberal aversion to national borders:

> It is neither necessary nor desirable that national boundaries should mark sharp differences in standards of living, that membership of a national group should entitle [it] to a share of the cake altogether different from that in which members of other groups share.

In practical terms, America is being subjected to free trade and mass immigration, despite the skepticism of the general populace, because the heirs of both Marx and Hayek are in agreement that national borders are artificial and undesirable.

Fleming foresees socialism continuing to expand in new directions. He notes that socialist parties

> embraced feminism, sexual freedom, anti-colonialism, and minority rights, and by the end of the last century a typical socialist agenda might include protection of endangered species, same-sex marriage, Third World development, and global government.

Indeed, environmentalism, with its almost unlimited scope for new governmental regulation and control, is likely to be particularly enticing:

> Green parties are generally made up of socialists and leftists who added environmentalism to their agenda without giving up their commitment to Marxism. . . . It is very possible that the next generation of socialists will be far more green than red.

Unsurprisingly, Fleming's overall assessment of socialism is negative. Even the socialists who have avoided mass violence have produced societies "run by meddlesome do-gooders whose interventions in the free market and in private life have produced dullness, sterility, and dependency." However, he concedes its achievements, including "often soften[ing] the hard lot of those who have failed to succeed in competitive societies." He credits Marx with seeing "what classical liberals refused to see, that industrial capitalism had undermined all the security enjoyed by poor people in traditional societies." He also notes that, "If liberal opponents of socialism usually win the arguments about efficiency, they are defeated rather easily on arguments about justice and morality." Fleming argues that seeking to reduce society to Ludwig von Mises' dictum "the means by which each individual member seeks to attain its own ends" will have little appeal outside the libertarian echo chamber.

Fleming also suggests that the "dullness, sterility, and dependency" wrought by socialism will be found in any mass society organized along bureaucratic lines, including our own. Fleming's own sympathies lie with those resisting such a mass society, and he deals with the often overlooked thinkers who sought a Third Way between socialism and unfettered capitalism, who desired

> a society made up of small farmers and shopkeepers, where local and regional cultural traditions were preserved and culture was more than a product sent out to radio stations and movie theaters.

Many will contend that any effort to recreate such a society is quixotic, but since the men who secured our independence from Great Britain and wrote our Constitution lived in such a society, it at least seems worth a try. ◈

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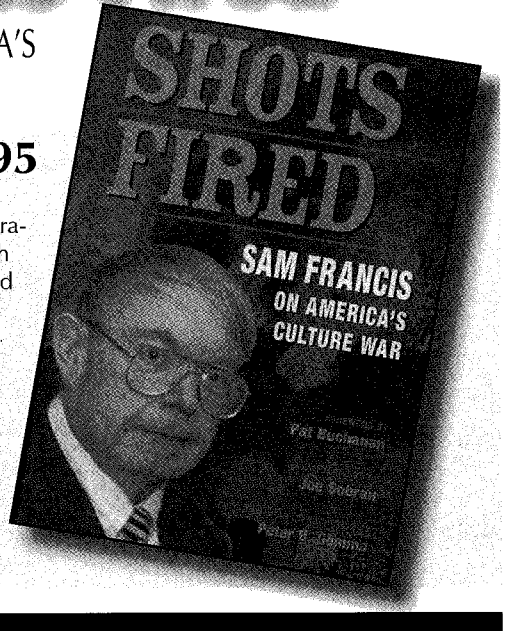
—*Aaron D. Wolf*



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The Best Government Money Can Buy

by H.A. Scott Trask

Age of Betrayal: The Triumph of Money in America, 1865-1900
by Jack Beatty
New York: Alfred A. Knopf;
483 pp., $30.00

All of our history is now "indoctrination by historical example." The academicians who write the officially approved, politically correct distortions of it have failed history, and us. They are of two types: the courtiers, smiling sycophants such as "presidential historian" Michael Beschloss and the insufferable Doris Kearns Goodwin; and their envious colleagues, politically correct pedants, whose books crowd the shelves of university libraries but are otherwise ignored. Jack Beatty, an editor at the *Atlantic* and a news analyst for NPR's *On Point*, writes better than all of them and proves a better historian. That is no surprise. We must look to our men of letters, and to dissidents and rebels, for real history now.

"This book tells the saddest story: How, having redeemed democracy in the Civil War, America betrayed it in the Gilded Age." The tale is all too true: the selling-off of the republic to the highest bidder, a crime which modern Americans should recognize, as it is happening again—through the agency, not coincidentally, of the same political party, with the active cooperation of the other. "The corporations have the law on their side," "own the Legislatures," and "control most of the newspapers and manufacture public opinion." That was the opinion of a Pennsylvania newspaper editor, writing at the time of the Homestead Strike of 1892. Just three years later, Supreme Court Justice Henry Brown warned of "the submergence of the people in a sordid despotism of wealth." But the corruption set in much earlier, as we learn from Walt Whitman's *Democratic Vistas* (1867, 1868), a fact that Beatty overlooks.

What happened? Beatty is better at answering *how* than the more difficult question of *why*. Contrary to persistent myths (the ones about the self-made man, the heroic entrepreneur, the Darwinian struggle of the fittest capitalist), the development came about through a vast program of state-supported industrial capitalism. From 1862 onward, "the industrial and financial interests the Republicans spoke for grasped the fostering hand" of government. They successfully lobbied for high tariffs, government contracts, low-interest loans, subsidies, land grants, the labor injunction, and, when the last failed to quell labor unrest, "state militia, federal marshals, and federal troops to break strikes and shoot strikers." In order to obtain these valuable benefits, they purchased state legislators and governors, congressmen and senators—even voters, a large proportion of whom "were purchasable."

Throughout the period, the "alliance between government and business remained the lever of private fortune and economic development." *Laissez-faire* was not a philosophy of freedom but one of many convenient slogans with which interested parties managed to ward off regulation and taxation while accepting the bounties bestowed by a bought government. (In private, capitalists expressed contempt for free-market economists; John D. Rockefeller referred to them as "academic Know-Nothings.")

The gulf between rhetoric and reality is a prominent theme in the book. Republicans championed "free labor," with its connotations of self-employment and artisan liberty, but delivered wage labor, a kind of industrial serfdom. The business press glorified the virtues of competition, but businessmen preferred the comforts of cooperation, corporate consolidation, and oligopoly. Corporate lawyers spoke of "liberty of contract" (as if a poor laborer and a mammoth industrial concern could negotiate across the table of equality) but pressed judges to rule strikes unconstitutional, and labor unions conspiracies in restraint of trade. Republicans warned of the dangers to property posed by "agrarians" and socialists, but it was they who were redistributing wealth. Everyone paid the tariff, but only two groups really benefited: those who owned stock in protected industries, and Union veterans and their families, as the tariff paid their pensions. It transferred wealth from the South and West to the East, from farmers to manufacturers, from the many to the few. Likewise government bonds: The people paid the interest and the principal through taxes (higher on land than on stocks and bonds), and the already rich reaped their unearned reward, becoming ever richer. Likewise mass immigration: It "piled up unskilled surplus workers," depressed wages, and "increased inequality."

"The people supported the government and the government supported the corporations," and they did it "with the people's money." So why did the people submit to this extortion? "Workers and farmers voted on synthetic or sham issues in corrupt elections that yielded oligarchy . . . not representative government." Why did the people allow themselves to be defrauded? One answer is the "politics of distraction." In the North, Republicans waved the bloody shirt; in the South, Democrats played the race card. (In 1898, they discovered the greatest distraction of them all—the overseas enemy, the imperial adventure.) A second answer is corruption. Elections were so dishonest that the only thing that gave them any validity was that the corruption was bipartisan. Voters were bribed to vote one way or intimidated not to vote at all. Ballot boxes were stuffed; others were poured into a river. At the end of the process stood Boss Tweed, who famously said, "the ballots make no result. The counters make the result." Once elected, politicians often succumbed to the temptations of office (free railroad passes, generous "retainers," corporate stock). When they did not, they were overruled by the "imperial judiciary," ready in the name of

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free enterprise and the Constitution to block reform. Beatty justly sums up the federal court's legacy: "railroads untaxed, monopolies protected, unions broken, farmers extorted, blacks segregated." Neither mass protest movements nor third-party insurgencies could break through the two-party system, with its winner-take-all results, while politicians proved "adept at co-optation, at calming the waters, at proposing snake-oil solutions to real problems."

"Gilded age politics induces pertinent despair about democracy." It seems almost an understatement. Beatty talks of "the paradox of democracy," how "the forms of democracy—parties, candidates, platforms, primaries, elections, choice—confer agreement on injustices," legitimate nondemocratic results, and induce a sense of fatalism and resignation among the mass of voters. "We can't rebel, we have the vote" is how Beatty describes the psychology of the disaffected. Could it be that the vote is the greatest opiate of them all?

Most of those who voted Republican, or who fought in the war, were betrayed in one way or another by the party. Laborers were promised "protection" and higher wages, but they got the opposite. The Northern farmer was promised a "home market" but ended up with lower commodity prices, higher taxes, and extortionate railroad rates. Free homesteads beckoned, but they were as delusive as the saying that rain followed the plow.

"Before 1890, two-thirds of all homesteads failed." Likewise the freedmen: After they had served their purpose, they were thrown overboard. What Beatty cannot see is that these betrayals were predictable, given the real object of pre-war Republican politics, which was the winning of office and its rich spoils; that antislavery, abolitionism, and Reconstruction would never have been had they not served the political, military, and economic aims of the party and its key constituency—aggregated capital.

The most powerful and enduring American myth is not exceptionalism but regeneration through violence (see the work of Richard Slotkin), Lincoln's "new birth of freedom" and "Operation Iraqi Freedom" being only two expressions of this myth. Yet an ancient truth has it that violence begets violence. Beatty rightly deplores the horrendous violence that wracked all parts of postbellum America, but the myth of redemptive war keeps him from seeing that it was the natural and predictable outcome of a civil conflict that killed over 600,000 and laid waste an entire region. Violence once sanctified is hard to contain. And neither victor nor vanquished is likely to learn the virtues of pacifism.

There is yet another parallel between the Gilded Age and our own time: market fundamentalism. However religious or democratic the country boasts of being, "money-making is our magician's serpent, remaining sole master of the field" (Whitman's *Vistas*). It determines everything. During the Great Railroad Strike of 1877, Henry Ward Beecher gave his infamous "bread and water sermon," arguing that railroad workers should be content with their wages, as they were set not by men but by the market. Henry Demarest Lloyd, the muckraking journalist and author of *Wealth Against Commonwealth* (1894), pointedly asked if you could "do anything with your fellow man provided you do it in the market?"

Isn't it time to substitute the rule of reason, and Christian ethics, for that of money?

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Seeing Clear

by Catharine Savage Brosman

In a Prominent Bar in Secaucus: New and Selected Poems, 1955-2007
by X.J. Kennedy
Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press; 209 pp., $18.95

X.J. Kennedy is admired for his great skill in treating contemporary topics in traditional forms and especially for his cultivation of light verse. The high quality, abundance, and breadth of his writing—poetry, children's work, fiction, textbooks—and his long presence on the literary scene make him one of the most important American poets today, as is suggested by reviewers' praise in eminent periodicals, including the *Times Literary Supplement* and the *New York Times Book Review*. That he is, nevertheless, often disregarded is doubtless because of the widespread assumption that light verse cannot be truly important. It is also an unflattering reflection on those critics and reviewers, the greater number, who disdain form and other aspects of poetic tradition and still, nearly a century later, cry, with Ezra Pound, "Make it new." Indeed, Kennedy does "make it new," with his own characteristic tone and diction and his choice of topics, but in a nonradicalized mode. The present book gathers work, including some not reprinted for a long while, from six previous collections (especially later ones) and several slimmer volumes; it also contains more than two-dozen new poems collected for the first time.

Throughout, Kennedy's writing illustrates what almost every literate person knows, even though many write as if they thought otherwise: that style, whether in prose or poetry, carries meaning and is thus an aspect of content. Such features as diction selected for its linguistic power, subtlety, or other interest; well-crafted sentences, balanced, precise, perhaps concise, and eschewing obscurity; and

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a pleasing, flowing movement, even if there are interruptions, all constitute the opposable thumb of style, which increases the power of the hand—that is, ordinary language. This is true even—perhaps especially—in extended prose works such as those by James, Proust, and Joyce, since even a lengthy, difficult novel consists, after all, of smaller units, where concision and clarity must enter into play. In verse, fixed form (visible or audible), rhythm, rhyme, echoes, and other devices magnify the semantic values of the words. This is obvious to anyone familiar with the English or other literary traditions, but bears repeating in the extended wake of the Imagists and others who have cultivated in literature only the direct, not to say the unfiltered, the raw. More style does not mean less matter, but better matter.

More often than not, Kennedy uses fixed stanza forms, iambic meter (characteristically, tetrameter or pentameter), and rhyme—often very clever or imperfect rhyme, frequently in couplets, as in this quatrain from "Flitting Flies" (eye floaters):

> At least, from peering out
> through cells
> I know that blindness to what
> dwells
> Too far beyond or swarms too
> near
> Is my best hope of seeing clear . . .

Elsewhere the poet uses an abcb stanza, or abab or consonance. He is skilled in creating other sorts of sound echoes, including interior rhyme. Free verse is not absent entirely, though, and with his good ear, using line breaks, beat, and sound echoes, he shapes it into a poem, not a piece of cut-up prose.

Cultivating wit in Pope's sense ("True wit is Nature to advantage dress'd, / What oft was thought but ne'er so well express'd"), Kennedy also displays wit in the sense of humor; the two are complementary, since humor, like style, sheds light on aspects of things and serves as a touchstone of truth. Donald Hall is quoted on the back cover of this volume as saying, quite rightly, that "many of Kennedy's poems are wit itself. His wit is a way of understanding." This wit is characteristic, despite the author's disclaimer ("On Being Accused of Wit"):

> Not so. I'm witless. Often in despair
> At long-worked botches I must throw away
> A line or two worth keeping all too rare.
> Blind chance not wit entices words to stay . . .

One of the wittiest pieces in the collection is "Reading Trip," concerning a poet's visit to an unnamed campus to read from his and others' verse. Many a reader will smile at his expressions of gratitude for lunchtime beer—he hadn't counted on it—with his corned beef and his greater relief at getting bourbon on ice after facing a hall only one-third filled and dealing with the inevitable weird or inept questioners.

Kennedy applies his intelligence, insight, and sympathetic understanding to a wide range of serious, even grave subjects. Consider these lines on the death of J.V. Cunningham, renowned for his epigrams:

> Now Cunningham, who rhymed
> by fits and starts,
> So loath to gush, most sensitive
> of hearts—
> Else why so hard-forged a protective crust?—
> Is brought down to the unresponding dust.
> Though with a slash a Pomp's
> gut he could slit,
> On his own work he worked his
> weaponed wit
> And penned with patient skill
> and lore immense,
> Prodigious mind, keen ear, rare
> common sense
> Only those words he could
> crush down no more
> Like matter pressured to a
> dwarf star's core.

In this poem—both meditation on death and homage to a fellow poet—Kennedy subtly echoes earlier writers, particularly his 18th-century predecessors. A different, tender treatment of death is found in "Snug," on the demise of Aunt Edith, who, "preoccupied with faintly useful service," would "do her best to please. But make us nervous." One of the new poems in the collection, "Rites," concerning a Mesolithic burial in Denmark, is an exquisite short piece in the voice of a dead child.

In other cases, his topics are entirely contemporary, as he deals incisively with matters such as cell phones, the exercise of eminent domain by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts ("On the Proposed Seizure of Twelve Graves in a Colonial Cemetery"), art instruction for apparently bored housewives ("Pottery Class"), and a church rite for motorcyclists ("The Blessing of the Bikes"). Among weightier modern themes is the death-of-God philosophy, dramatized in "God's Obsequies," at which those "who had helped do Him in" are in attendance: Karl Marx with "a wide smirk on his face"; "Friedrich Nietzsche, worm-holed and leechy"; Sigmund Freud, "whose couch had destroyed / the soul"; "Bertrand Russell and a noisy bustle / of founders of home-made churches"; and "Jean-Paul Sartre bawling 'Down with Montmartre!'"

The presence, sometimes allusive, of other writers in this collection is noteworthy. There are translations or adaptations of poems by Ts'ui Hao, Charles d'Orléans (a version so free it is called a "violation"), Baudelaire, Hofmannsthal, and Apollinaire. One poem alludes, wittily, to Emily Dickinson; another is based on a line and a half discarded by Dante Gabriel Rossetti. "The Ballad of Fenimore Woolson and Henry James," a long poem by Kennedy's standards, is one of his finest. Along with many additional kinds of allusion, other poems mention, or are dedicated to, such figures as Milton, Lewis Carroll, Yeats, Allen Ginsberg, Edgar Bowers, and John Brennan, a gifted student of Kennedy who killed himself. This is not just name-drop-

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ping in verse, however; their presence attests to the poet's generous, even cordial approach to the world and appreciation of those predecessors and contemporaries, even Ginsberg, who, like him, have mediated for discerning readers this world, in its comedy and tragedy, its delights and terrors and maddening resistance to human beings.

It is to be expected that, in any collection in which light verse is prominent, there will be a few pieces that border on doggerel. Kennedy is not immune to it; some readers may even enjoy it. The title poem, which, the author notes, can be sung to the tune of "Sweet Betsy From Pike," is such a poem. It is heavy on beat, with clever rhymes, bits of amusing diction, and an indulgent irony about the New Jersey city where the "prominent bar" is located, but the faded beauty peddling (presumably) her charms in that tavern and then hauled off in a squad car is as trite a poetic figure as a sexual one, and the poem falls flat. It will be remembered for the wrong reasons, whereas a short lyric such as "Little Elegy," dedicated to "a child who skipped rope," comes to mind for the right ones—its admirable use of the figure of rope-jumping, its tenderness and concision. The few lapses here can easily be forgiven, however, in light of the whole collection, which displays Kennedy's many strengths and proves he is a poet for those who know that poetry is not merely an image, a cry of rage, a complaint, or a political protest.

Catharine Savage Brosman is poetry editor for Chronicles.

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Anarcho-Tyranny in Action

by Wayne Allensworth

The Tyranny of Good Intentions: How Prosecutors and Law Enforcement Are Trampling the Constitution in the Name of Justice
by Paul Craig Roberts and Lawrence M. Stratton
New York: Three Rivers Press; 264 pp., $14.95

In a recent column, Chuck Baldwin (lately nominated as the Constitution Party's presidential candidate) pointed to something ominous that was largely ignored in the media reporting on the Eliot Spitzer prostitution scandal. Spitzer had been found out because of "suspicious" financial transactions his bank reported to the authorities. Dr. Baldwin (who is pastor of a Baptist church in Pensacola, Florida, and rightly disapproves of Spitzer's behavior), citing a *USA Today* report by Thomas Frank, noted that "federal police agencies are secretly looking at the financial transactions of the American people all the time."

Frank wrote that

> Each year, federal agents peek at the financial transactions of millions of Americans—without their knowledge. The same type of information that raised suspicions about New York Gov. Eliot Spitzer is reviewed every day by authorities to find traces of money laundering, check fraud, identity theft or any crime that may involve a financial institution. . . . The Treasury Department's database now contains records of more than 100 million financial transactions going back to at least 1996. . . . Financial institutions have long been required to report cash transactions over $10,000. Those reports—simple notices of a deposit or withdrawal—account for more than 90% of the records the enforcement network gets each year. . . . Far more controversial are secret "suspicious activity reports" filed by financial institutions and reviewed by teams of agents spread around the country. The investigation of New York Gov. Eliot Spitzer began when a bank spotted potentially suspicious transfers from several accounts and filed reports with the IRS . . . The number of suspicious activity reports soared from 413,000 in 2003 to 1 million in 2006 . . .

A fairly common response to this kind of spying is "I've got nothing to hide," and citizens of the Land of the Free have grown accustomed to lining up for drug tests, polygraph examinations, and intrusive security measures, all in the name of law enforcement and, ironically, defending our "freedom." Pastor Baldwin has encountered this kind of preemptive law enforcement personally; he tells a story of life in our "surveillance society" involving a cash purchase of a pickup truck back in the 90's:

> To my shock and chagrin, a few days following the purchase of my truck, a criminal investigator from the IRS came to my front door and demanded to know where I got the cash to pay for my truck. . . . After a lengthy interrogation, the IRS man left, but not before issuing me a subpoena to appear before a federal grand jury. Remember, this was in the late '90's, before Jorge Bush and Alberto Gonzales got their dictatorial hands on the helm of the myriad federal police agencies.

Paul Craig Roberts and Lawrence M. Stratton have revised and reissued their book *The Tyranny of Good Intentions* in order to address the ramping up of the national-security state under President George W. Bush. "Since this book was first published in 2000,"

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they write,

> the erosion of the legal principles that protect the innocent has continued apace. One could even say that the US criminal justice system is no longer concerned with innocence or guilt, only with ruining as many people as quickly as possible in order to justify budgets and political ambitions.

The authors focus on the Chief Executive himself:

> President Bush has acknowledged that he violated the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act . . . a felony offense each time he did it. Bush claimed that, as commander-in-chief during his war against terror, he is exempt from the law. . . . The Bush administration argues that its powers are necessary in order to protect Americans from terrorism. The administration has used the threat of terror . . . to create the legal conditions for a domestic police state.

Much of this book is devoted to horror stories about citizens whose rights have been violated, prosecutors who value conviction rates over justice, and a frightened public—conditioned to the expansion of the state—that is all too willing to accept such conditions. The property rights of Americans were once protected by government; today, property seizures perpetrated by government, often on very dubious grounds, have become commonplace. The law once served as a limitation on the state; now, crimes are uncovered where no criminal intent existed, or created by "sting" operations—and, if government cannot find a law on the books under which to charge an offending citizen, it can create one *ex post facto* and charge him retroactively.

The erosion of our historic rights, as the authors see it, can be traced back to a conflict between what William Blackstone called the "rights of Englishmen" and the utilitarian philosophy of Jeremy Bentham. The latter

> argued that Blackstonian legal principles [of limited government] were relevant only in an age of tyrants. With the rise of democracy in which the people hold the power, Bentham no longer saw any reason to fear government power. Bentham argued that in a democracy legal principles needlessly limit the government's . . . ability to achieve the greater good for the greatest number.

Today, many Americans—"conservatives" especially—side with Bentham.

The authors' arguments in favor of Blackstone over Bentham are familiar to the readers of this magazine, being frequently employed in polemical battles over mass democracy *versus* republican government, utilitarianism *versus* tradition, and the perfectibility of mankind by means of therapeutic legislation devised by the supposedly well-intentioned managerial class and its agents. Roberts and Stratton hint at what a utilitarian view has brought us in terms of the degradation of morals, of ends used to justify the means, and a win-at-all-costs approach that can end only in the ruthless bottom-line mentality of the globalizers.

The *Tyranny of Good Intentions* has much to recommend it, not least of which is a review of what our historic rights are and where they came from. In many instances, however, the examples Stratton and Roberts cite of specific cases are not adequately sourced. While the book includes an extensive bibliography, it offers scant footnotes. Few Americans are unaware of the arbitrary nature of the bureaucratic-managerial state we live in, but in a scholarly work aimed at educating as well as informing the public, careful sourcing is critical. In fact, the authors' account of the "Jena 6" case is incorrect. (There was no connection between the now-infamous "noose" incident and the subsequent vicious beating that prompted the arrests of the suspects.) And, while the authors do a fine job of describing the tyrannical results that "good intentions" have produced, they give little attention to the anarchic side of the equation.

I have in mind, of course, the late Samuel Francis's term "anarcho-tyranny," in which real crimes go unpunished while the state targets law-abiding citizens in order to enforce its ideology and expand its own power. Roberts and Stratton do note that for ambitious prosecutors it is much easier to pick out targets and pressure them for plea bargains in overcrowded courts than to run a proper trial or punish real criminals. The flip side of this situation is that it is more important to the system to punish behavior that is detrimental to its justifying ideology than to fight real crime. Murder, robbery, rape, and assault often appear less dangerous to it than transgressions against what has come to be called "political correctness." Cops may be more inclined to deal with traffic violations than to risk their lives and careers (or risk being accused of "racial profiling") by policing an inner city "no-go zone."

Stratton and Roberts describe the exploitation of the "War on Drugs" and President Bush's "War on Terror" as efforts to expand the state's police powers, which they connect to the erosion of the presumption of innocence and the sanctity of property rights, as well as to the expansion of the surveillance state. Their arguments ring true, but I had some trouble believing that our prisons are filled with innocents framed by the police, even allowing for the prosecutorial misconduct the authors chronicle. The realities of crime and punishment in 21st-century America are perhaps more complex than this book suggests.

Corresponding editor Wayne Allensworth is the author of The Russian Question.

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by Aaron D. Wolf

Out With the Old

My grandfather has congestive heart failure. I hate to say it, but I probably won't see him this time next year. "Gramp," as I've called him since I can remember, taught me how to shoot and hunt, taught me how to change the oil, taught me how to drive a truck, taught me how to run a trot line and how to shake a catalpa tree for worms. He helped me buy a hotrod and a Fender strat. His daddy's gun sits by my bed, and I have paper money from Okinawa that he brought back from the War. For half of my life, we lived in the same house. I named a son (Carl) after him.

I sometimes wish he would have joined me in going over to the Lutheran church, but Gramp is a hardcore Baptist and just never was interested in learning why we do all of that standing up and sitting down, why we say some of the same words every week. ("The Lord be with you. / And with thy spirit.") On the other hand, had he joined me in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, I wonder what he would have made of LCMS President Gerald R. Kieschnick's signature slogan: "This is not your grandfather's church."

It was on the basis of that breathtaking statement that President Kieschnick launched Ablaze!™ in 2004—a "missions movement" designed to "share the Good News of Jesus with 100 million unreached or uncommitted people by . . . 2017." From the get-go this business of counting "critical events," as Kieschnick puts it, seemed very un-Lutheran. Tallying up decisions for Christ makes sense after a Billy Graham Crusade, but it does not square with the Augsburg Confession—a document once known in a Church that respected Her grandfathers.

"When one person gives a clear presentation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to another person," says the Ablaze!™ website, "so that there is an opportunity for that person to respond, this activity 'counts' toward the 100 million goal." But how is one to know whether he has participated in an activity that fits the bill? Here is some helpful guidance:

> A congregation puts 1,500 flyers in the local paper. The 1,500 flyers *do not count*. But, any inquiries that came as a result of the flyers and opened the door for the congregation to share the Good News with an unreached or uncommitted person will count toward the 100 million goal.

Another thing that *did not count* was a long-running and surprisingly popular radio program called *Issues, Etc.*—"Talk radio for the thinking Christian." Every weekday from three to six in the afternoon, and for two hours during a nationally syndicated broadcast on Sunday evenings, the Rev. Todd Wilken talked about current events, politics (Srdja Trifkovic was often interviewed on foreign affairs), popular culture, and—above all else—Lutheran theology. As Lutheran theology has something to do with "the Good News"—Lutheran churches were first called "*evangelische*"—it should come as no surprise that, quite often during *Issues, Etc.*, the Gospel was "shared." And while it is really impossible to "count" the work of the Holy Spirit, it is safe to say that the program produced results. An ever-growing audience testified to this. Countless lifelong Lutherans discovered their own Church's doctrine and learned why we say those same words every week. Unbelievers called in with questions, and many became catechumens in Lutheran congregations. *Issues, Etc.* live broadcasts from parish halls across the heartland reflected the excitement of the faithful who had a renewed sense of their own identity.

When David Strand, a layman and the chairman of the LCMS Board of Communication Services, fired the Rev. Wilken and his veteran producer, Jeff Schwarz, on March 18 (Holy Tuesday), there was an immediate backlash. Over 7,500 signed a petition, and several districts (dioceses) issued formal complaints. President Clinton . . . er, Kieschnick was quick to declare that the decision "transpired with my awareness but neither by my order nor at my direction." Soon thereafter, fellow LCMSer Mollie Hemingway wrote critically of the "Holy Tuesday Treachery" in the *Wall Street Journal*, tying this "critical event" to the theological aberrations of Ablaze!™. (As a regular guest on *Issues, Etc.*, I was always cautioned never to speak ill of Ablaze!™ on the air.) President Kieschnick fired back a letter to the WSJ editor, explaining in carefully selected detail that this decision was all about money and denouncing Hemingway for suggesting that our synod is "deeply divided." (How ridiculous!)

Speaking of money, even as the plan to ax *Issues, Etc.* was entering President Kieschnick's "awareness," one new LCMS congregation was using $25,000 in Ablaze!™ dollars to pay for billboards around suburban St. Louis that read, for example, "JeffersonHills Church sucks." As KSDK NewsChannel 5 in St. Louis reported, "Beneath those messages is a hyphen, followed by 'Satan,' as if it's a note from the biblical Prince of Darkness."

"I seen that thing and I about fell over," one passerby told KSDK. "I just thought maybe some atheist group might have put it up, or something," said another. "We're getting a lot of responses," said "Lead Pastor Steve Benke."

Actually, I think President Kieschnick is right. *This* is not my grandfather's church. ◈

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by Scott P. Richert

What's Good for Rockford Acromatics

Dean Olson, the chairman of Rockford Acromatic Products, an after-market auto-parts manufacturer, is a longtime supporter of Republican candidates. Still, he is not optimistic about the November election: "Even though the Democrats are in full rout, we're not able to mount an effective challenge. I don't see the leadership there."

While Rockford voters lean Democratic, they might still be swayed in a presidential election by a Republican who took seriously the causes of the current recession: a costly and unnecessary war; the falling dollar; rising gas prices; overextended credit, both personal and mortgage; and the outsourcing of U.S. jobs.

John McCain is not that candidate. He has hitched his wagon to the Iraq war and expressed his desire to "bomb bomb bomb, bomb-bomb Iran"; he does not dare say much about the subprime mortgage debacle, lest his eventual Democratic opponent use the opportunity to bring up the Keating Five; he has told manufacturing workers across the country that their jobs are going overseas and are never coming back; and, like every other national politician of both parties, he knows that the falling dollar is about the only thing propping up what remains of the U.S. economy, so any remedy to fix the decline might well be worse than the disease. If that means even higher gas prices going into November, McCain will just have to take his chances.

The factory worker who has seen his job shipped overseas might (all other things being equal) turn to a Democratic candidate who, at least compared with McCain, talks tough on trade and outsourcing. (Of course, the fact that the Democratic nominee will be Barack Obama means that all other things are not equal.) But what about the factory owners—not the stockholders of multinational corporations but the businessmen at the helm of the small to medium-sized factories that are the backbone of U.S. manufacturing?

Like Dean Olson, most factory owners here tend to favor Republican candidates. With the economy headed south and a Republican in the White House, that support might well erode, but in Rockford, all of the signs are pointing the other way. Is the prospect of Democratic control of the economy so terrifying that it makes four more years of war, high fuel prices, and recession look like the lesser of two evils?

Those concerns are not irrelevant, but the larger part of the electoral calculus may be that, for many small manufacturers, the softness of the economy will not be an issue this fall. The dollar has fallen so far that, even with the concomitant rise in fuel costs, American manufactured goods look cheap to customers in Europe. We are nowhere close to wiping out the recent trade deficit in manufactured goods, and manufacturers should be cautious about expecting the (relatively) good times to last, but if anyone can continue the Bush economic legacy, it is John McCain.

As Mr. Olson points out, "I'd rather be running a small business right now than Ford Motor Company, wondering how to compensate for the loss of truck sales because of gas prices."

The upshot is that, as in 2004, social issues might well play a larger role. The California Supreme Court's May ruling on homosexual "marriage"; the move toward "therapeutic cloning," including the creation of human-animal hybrids to grow organ tissue; and, of course, the decades-long battle over abortion—all are issues that John McCain, a political chameleon, might try to make his own. And socially conservative small businessmen, doing well enough at the moment, will feel more comfortable casting their vote for a cynical politician than for an ideologue who comes down on the wrong side of all of those issues.

Yet McCain is not likely to try to stop the spread of homosexual "marriage" or "therapeutic cloning" once elected; moreover, he supports embryonic stem-cell research and may even undo what little good Bush did.

The fact that manufacturing can recover while the economy is sliding into recession gives the lie to the idea that the American economy is a monolith. Multinational corporations have understood this for some time, and used it to their advantage—to the detriment of the American working class and small manufacturers. When the hard times hit, small manufacturers never get the consideration that the multinationals do. "When Rockford Acromatics starts to falter, I guarantee you there will be no federal bailout," Dean Olson wryly notes.

It is time to turn the tables—to leverage the weak dollar to bring in business from overseas that can finance new equipment and processes that can put American manufacturers not on par with other countries technologically, but significantly ahead.

Let McCain extol the virtues of outsourcing and retraining for the "information economy" and the "healthcare industry." The small manufacturers who once made America the economic envy of the world know that a country that does not make things has no real say in its economic future. By concentrating less on the American economy and focusing instead on planning for the future of their own businesses, they could do more to revive the economic fortunes of the United States than John McCain could ever dream of doing.

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Letter From Rumania

by Derek Turner

What Civilization Remains

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We once had a book about Eastern Europe at home, in between the encyclopedias and *Robinson Crusoe*. I do not remember its title nor the author's name, but it contained highly atmospheric black and white photographs of Rumanian scenes. There were baroque chateaux, sturgeons, eagles, wolves, bears, wild boar, bends in the Danube, flowered meads in Moldova, towering mountains and wayside shrines, farmworkers dancing in village squares or pushing horse-drawn plows; and an exuberantly mustachioed princeling, elegantly cross-legged in a chunkily carved wooden chair and smiling with supreme confidence at the camera, magnificent in spurred boots, breeches, saber, a frogged military tunic, and a fur hat. Reading those place names—Wallachia, Oltenia, Moldavia, Muntenia, Maramures, Bukovina, the Banat, Turnu-Severin, the Iron Gates, and Transylvania—my eight-year-old mind was entranced. The book was pulled to pieces, but its images have always remained with me—a romantic repository, a reminder that Europe could still be wild. So it is really quite surprising that I did not get to Rumania until 2007.

The tarmac shimmered with heat as we took a taxi into Bucharest. In the far south, animals were dropping dead in the fields, crops were withering, and rivers were drying up. It was suitably extreme weather for a place that I had populated with folk-dancing, sausage-eating, rough wine-drinking, God- and vampire-fearing artisans wearing handmade clothes, living in wooden houses, and driving horses and carts.

There was very little evidence of this enchanted hinterland in Bucharest, a centerless city that has not been beautiful since the interwar years, when it was a "Paris of the East" filled with casinos patronized by the Hooray Heinrichs of Mitteleuropa. Then came the war and a reluctant alliance with Germany, which gave Transylvania back to the Hungarians and wolfed down Rumania's precious oil, while promising the return of Bessarabia and Transdniestr. The city suffered a massive earthquake in 1940, then heavy Allied bombing, and finally fighting damage after Rumania sensibly switched sides in August 1944.

Whereas Budapest was restored beautifully after 1945, Bucharest was governed by people who felt that Socialist Man would prefer to live in massive concrete apartment blocks instead of houses with gardens. Chief among these was one Nicolae Ceausescu, a man of obscure origins who had been imprisoned because of his Socialist affiliations. By 1965, he had become Rumania's leader, with a reputation as a man with whom the West could do business. This business included a state visit to the United Kingdom in 1984, during which the "ghastly little man" (as the Queen is supposed to have referred to him) stayed at Buckingham Palace, from which he and his practical entourage removed not only monogrammed towels but even bathroom fittings as mementos.

Less amusing than this petty larceny was his decision to leave an architectural legacy to the ages. Another earthquake, in 1977, encouraged him, but it was not nearly as destructive as his bulldozers. One sixth of what remained of historic Bucharest was leveled on his orders, including ancient monasteries and churches and thousands of homes. In their place there arose the neoclassical People's Palace, dominating the whole southern half of Bucharest, like a gigantic ice-cream cake at the end of specially laid-out boulevards designed to focus all eyes on the seat of what is reputedly the world's second-largest building (after the Pentagon). Like everything that contains the word *People's*, the palace is utterly heartless—a vainglorious confection that would look out of proportion in any setting. Its chief quality is vast vulgarity. It is impressive only in its dimensions, by Ceausescu's insistence that everything used in its construction come from Rumania, and by the anecdotes of how he and his wife would contradict each other and respecify on the hoof, ordering door surrounds to be changed, and making and remaking massive marble staircases up to four times. The building has still not been completed, and it is a massive financial drain for the post-communist governments (who use it as their parliament building).

Bucharest does have attractive reminders of the past—candle-smoked, silver-lined Orthodox churches with naive paintings of saints ascending and the tormented descending, the Hanul Manuc (the only surviving 18th-century travelers' inn), the remains of Vlad Tepes's princely palace, a handful of old streets and alleyways in the Lipscani district, some handsome mansions along the monumental Sos Kisleff, and the Village Museum, containing rural buildings salvaged from Rumania's regions on the orders of King Carol from 1936 onward. The city museums contain some good items—a plaster cast of Trajan's Column, which shows the eventual triumph of the Romans over the Dacian indigenes, Dacian artifacts, interesting Rumanian paintings, and an exhibition of Ceausescu memorabilia, including some hilariously bad portraits of the unhandsome First Couple. We panted around the chief sites of the 1989 Revolution that finally put paid to Ceausescu, looking out for the bullet holes in buildings. We tried to imagine his last speech from the balcony of the Central Committee of the Communist Party building; as the crowd booed, he escaped by helicopter from the roof while the police fired indiscriminately into the assem-

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bly of onlookers, who then surged into the Securitate headquarters, releasing prisoners and destroying documents. No one was sorry when he was executed on Christmas Day of that year.

Having finished with Bucharest, we hired a much-scratched car and dashed across the Wallachian plain, along uncharacteristically good roads made ugly by oil derricks, nodding donkeys, and lurid flares. It was strange to think that this was the home territory of Vlad Tepes, and that he had probably ridden along the route of this road, perhaps fleeing advancing Turks and plotting pointed revenge in the passes. He could never have guessed that deep under his horse's hooves was a viscous liquid that later Vlachs would regard as much more valuable than cattle or even churches.

Soon the road started to twist and climb—up into Transylvania!—and a thunderstorm broke around us, as we bumped in and out of potholes, behind massive trucks heaped high with thick tree trunks of up to 70 feet long. Similarly sized trees towered over the road, and we began to see horses and carts, with blurry sack-wrapped people hunched against the heavy rain. As we came into Brasov through vile industrial outskirts, the rain stopped for a while—only to return with great intensity while we were sitting in a pavement café an hour later. Transylvania gets more rain than the rest of Rumania and retains its verdancy even in the hottest of years.

Outskirts notwithstanding, Brasov (formerly Kronstadt) is one of the handsomest towns in Transylvania (formerly Siebenbürgen). Originally a Dacian settlement, Kronstadt became one of the most important Saxon towns, a staging post between Northern Europe and Constantinople. This trading history is demonstrated colorfully inside Brasov's most famous landmark, the large Black Church (so-called because its walls were blackened when Austrians burned the town in 1689), where beautiful Turkish rugs have been hung on the walls as offerings by devout merchants—a pleasingly exotic effect for a Lutheran church.

Derek Turner

Near Cluj-Napoca/Kolosvar—a typical rural Transylvanian scene.

According to legend, the children enticed underground by the Pied Piper of Hamelin reemerged at Brasov, becoming the town's first Saxon burghers. In fact, the centuries of German occupation began in the 12th century, when Teutonic Knights were brought in by the Hungarian king to safeguard Transylvania's eastern frontier. They soon became too restive and were expelled, but they left behind the peasant families that had accompanied them from Saxony. From that time right up to the 20th century, the Saxons of Transylvania were a major factor in Eastern European affairs—a determined, (eventually) mostly Lutheran ethnic bloc whose wealth was coveted or alliance sought by Hungarian, Tatar, Bulgar, Turk, Hun, and of course the Vlachs. Their presence also impelled Hitler's *Drang nach Osten*, and the Volksdeutsch of Siebenbürgen died in large numbers on the Eastern Front—which meant that they were the objects of revenge after 1945, like their fellows in the Sudetenland and East Prussia. Kronstadters who survived the war and revenge attacks were targeted for dissolution through the expedients of moving Rumanians from outside the city walls into the town and importing Moldovans to work in the new factories. In the 1980's, many of those who had survived were offered the opportunity of going to Germany. In the Kronstadt/Brasov area today, only around one percent are Saxons, although Germans are starting to move again to the area in small numbers, and German money has been put into building restoration and social projects. The Saxons are not the only relict ethnic group in this area; the Csángós of Barsa Land, a tiny Hungarian population isolated from their fellow Szeklers, an outpost of an outpost, hang on just outside Brasov, where there is a moving museum filled with shaggy sheepskin coats and grotesque masks every bit as exotic as anything that can be found in Africa or Asia.

The Rumanian demographic dominance is symbolized by a bronze of Romulus and Remus outside the city hall; the Rumanians pride themselves on their real or imagined Daco-Roman ancestry, a habit encouraged by Mussolini, during whose rule Italy donated many such sculptures. Today, E.U. membership has meant that the Rumanians are also emigrating in large numbers, leaving "skills shortages" behind them even as they fill them in Western Europe. Undermanned or parsimonious Rumanian factories are starting to employ workers from further east—Moldavians, Ukrainians, Russians, even some Chinese. In Western Europe, many "Rumanians" are actually gypsies. It was after a

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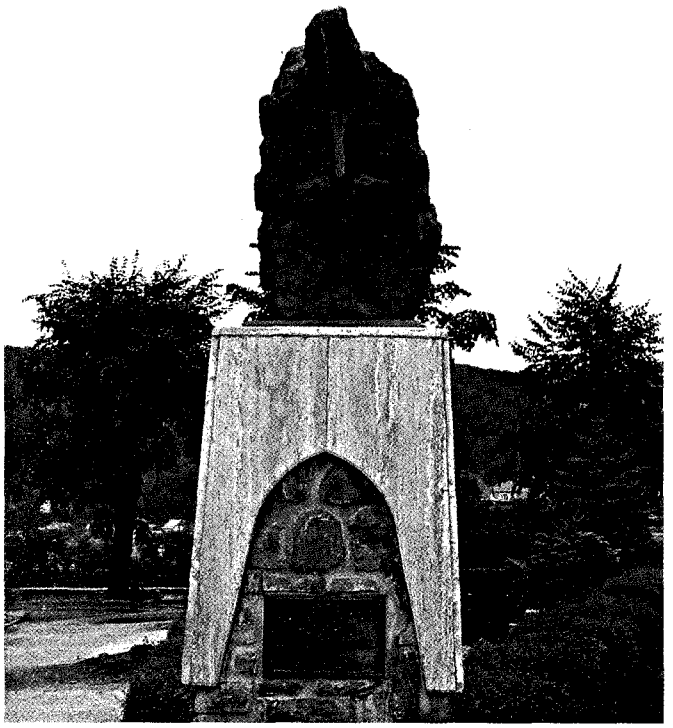

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Bust of Vlad Tepes in Sighisoara.

crime spree carried out by Rumanian gypsies in Italy that Alessandra Mussolini made the fatuous remark that "all Rumanians are criminals," which led to the resignation of the Greater Rumania Party (PRM) members from her E.U. Parliament group Identity, Tradition and Sovereignty and its subsequent collapse. It is ironic that a rude remark about gypsies should have led to this result, especially given the PRM's notorious anti-gypsy sentiments. Dislike of the Romany runs right through Rumanian society, with even President Traian Basescu being censured in November for referring to a journalist as a "stinking gypsy."

Brasov is a good base for exploring the famous Saxon fortified churches, as some of the best are within a 20-mile radius. These churches, built as early as the 13th century and maintained as fortifications right up until World War II, are unique, but all look fairly similar—a square, tall tower with a pitched roof looming over whitewashed walls honeycombed with rooms, enclosing a courtyard where cattle could be protected. The largest of these is at Prejmer, northeast of Brasov along typically atrocious roads, where there are 272 rooms and storage spaces within the church's circumvallation. Many of the town's chimneys were crowned with the scruffy nests of storks on specially built platforms.

We met an elderly Saxon couple, Herr and Frau Thome, in the town of Homorod (Homoroden in German), who invited us into their kitchen to shelter from the rain, after which Herr Thome showed us around the fortified church. From atop its steep shingled tower we could see a wide, soaking valley, with men cutting wood in their back gardens and cows leaning contentedly over handmade gates. Herr Thome sat and looked into space while we climbed the tower and explored the nave, with its naive paintings of angels and illustrations from the parables. He and his wife are 2 of only 15 Saxons left in the village (there were 800 before 1939); his uncle died in 1942 in Russia. He had never forgiven the Russians—"*Barbarisch, barbarisch*!" he said to us and to the Polish cyclists who had arrived at the same time.

Our next stop was Vlad Tepes's birthplace of Sighisoara (still Schässburg to Herr Thome), the most obviously archaic of all Transylvanian towns. It has an extraordinary Gothic clock tower that dominates the skyline and up which you can climb for an expansive view of the Tarnava Mare valley, the nine remaining bastion towers, the Orthodox church across the river, with fields and woods beyond for shining miles. You can also get a closer look at the quarter-jacks, which rotate endlessly out into the open beside the clock—Roman soldiers, goddesses, and lightning-bolt-wielding figures from myth. The town contains other distinctive structures, such as the House of the Stag, where a stone stag's head and antlers protrude out of the corner of the building; the Scholar's Stairs, a covered wooden walkway built in 1642; and the Market Hall, where crude cherubim prop up local foodstuffs, including a wels, the famous giant catfish of the Danube. There is also Vlad Tepes's supposed childhood home, and a small bronze bust of him beside the Monastery Church.

Tepes is more than just a lucrative tourist icon for Rumanians; he is a potent symbol of uncompromising resistance to foreign domination—which on one occasion included impaling 10,000 Turkish prisoners in the path of an advancing Turkish army, which must have been somewhat discouraging for them, and on another evincing his displeasure with emissaries who had not removed their turbans in his presence by nailing them into place. (By contrast, his younger brother, Radu the Handsome, was one of the Sultan's catamites.) Tepes may have been the first man in history to suffer from bad press; he was unlucky enough to commit his atrocities just when printing had been invented and the new industry was anxious for copy. When he picked a fight with the Siebenburgers, the largely German printing industry was swift to rush to the epistolary aid of its compatriots by publishing highly sensationalized stories about Tepes—although the metamorphosis from murderer to blood-drinking undead was a later development. In many ways he was merely a man of his times and place. Incomprehensibly, the present Rumanian government, a Liberal-Democrat coalition reelected in November 2007, is a strong supporter of Turkish entry into the European Union. (However, it also takes a pro-Serbian stance toward Kosovo secession—less out of hostility to Islam than out of fear of the precedent for the restive Szeklers.)

From Sighisoara, we headed north to Târgu Mures (Marosvásárhely to Hungarians), one of the main cities in the Székeley Land, the Hungarian part of Rumania. Just under half of the town's population is still ethnically Hungarian, and there were ethnic riots here as late as 1990. It is a town of fine Secession-era buildings and *art-nouveau* decoration dating from the *belle époque* of the Austro-Hungarian

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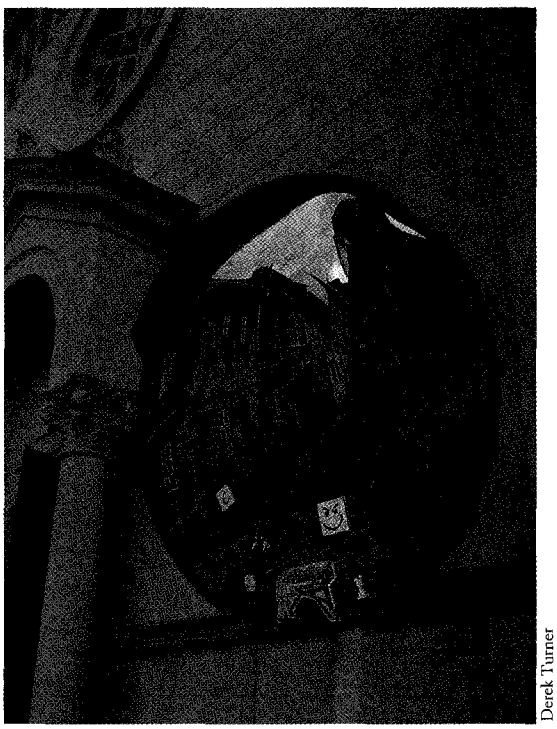
Empire, the period recalled wistfully by Miklós Bánffy in his great trilogy *Erdélyi Történet* (*A Transylvanian Tale*—published in English as *The Writing on the Wall*) and which Patrick Leigh-Fermor experienced just before it was finally swept away by the war. Bánffy and Leigh-Fermor evoke a world of feudal estates, old country houses with "still undiminished libraries," cultured and elegant men and women, picnics, dances, duels, hunts, and what Leigh-Fermor later described as the "unlimited kindness" of the Hungarian aristocracy even in its decline. It is unsurprising that the Székeley national anthem pleads, "Lord, don't let us lose Transylvania!" Hungarians had possessed the province for around 1,000 years. But ethnic Rumanians view things differently; for them, the long Hungarian suzerainty meant centuries of impoverishment, and social, linguistic, and religious marginalization, a debased state for a people tracing its descent from dogged Dacians and Roman soldiers. Târgu Mures boasts one of Rumania's best literary collections, in the shape of the Teleki-Bolyai Library, which contains over 40,000 volumes built up by one of the most eminent of Hungarian families. There was also a fascinating collection of paintings by a Rumanian artist, Gheorge Opriz, an illiterate peasant who painted scenes of daily life, from candlelit graveyards to starlit shepherds calling home their flocks with alpenhorns.

Near Târgu Mures was the saddest place we saw—the former Teleki Palace at Gerneyeszeg (now Gornesti), with a window for each day of the year and a room for each week, the paint peeling off the dusky pink walls, the statues of gods and goddesses on the grounds teetering and broken, looking over choked ponds alive with jumping frogs. The palace is now a sanatorium for children abandoned or suffering with AIDS, who sleep in echoing dormitories that were once elegant salons. Healthcare posters are pinned up above blocked-up baroque fireplaces, linoleum has been laid down over parquet dance floors, and noble proportions have been foreshortened by partition walls. Tough-looking, dark children tumble and play outside below mossy statues of pagan deities. (Healthcare in Rumania has a bad reputation; the country still has a leper colony, Europe's last, down amidst the whispering reeds of the Danube Delta.)

Another reminder of faded Hungarian greatness is in Cluj-Napoca (Kolosvár to Magyars)—where we found the house in which one of the greatest of all Hungarian kings, Matthias Corvinus, was born in 1443. Corvinus, who was the son of another famous king, John Hunyadi, ruled Hungary from 1458 to 1490, during which time his famous Black Army kept peace while he and his cultivated Neapolitan wife initiated a mini-renaissance. There was a popular Hungarian saying that "justice departed" with Corvinus's death. The imposing equestrian statue of Corvinus that stands outside the massive St. Michael's Cathedral (Catholic, then Calvinist, then Unitarian, and now Catholic again) was for years the subject of an ethnic squabble between the remaining Szeklers and a bumptious Rumanian mayor who ordered the removal of the words *Rex Hungariae* from the plinth, and then tried to have the statue moved. Also in the town is the Bánffy Palace, a late-18th-century beauty that once belonged to the author of *The Writing on the Wall* and now houses the National Art Museum. Much lower down the sociocultural scale were the many inadvertently amusing T-shirt slogans sported by locals glorying in their sophistication—ugly machine-made garments bearing pseudo-Transatlantic constructs such as "Hi I'm Love Sexy" rapidly replacing the intricate embroideries and hard-wearing fabrics wrought with infinite labor from Transylvanian flora and fauna. Like everyone else, the Rumanians are succumbing to the seductiveness of consumerism and E.U. membership, and it is a safe bet that within ten years Rumania will display much less character than she does at present. Over the winnowing times ahead, much of what manages to survive from Rumania's past may be saved for Western tourists.

There was still time for reveries as we drove south through an Elysian countryside—small fields of organic crops, acres of sunflowers, meadows filled with colorful "weeds," clumps of unkempt trees, rocky rivers, eagles wheeling in thermals, startlingly large butterflies, people with lived-in faces and homespun clothes selling brilliant peppers and squashes by the side of the road, gypsies in carts, handmade haystacks built around poles, dogs rolling around in dusty village streets, artesian wells, comfortable wooden houses with heavy verandas and flower-heavy balconies, heaps of great logs piled up against the winter, enclosed Protestant graveyards, great houses with gaping blank windows and grass growing in the gutters. Today this beautiful landscape, with its rare plants and animals, is subject to the Common Agricultural Policy. It is too early to say whether the CAP's professed commitment to preserving "traditional rural landscapes, and bird and wildlife conservation" can prevail against all the opposing regulations governing such things as farm hygiene and rights of access for foreign produce. It is but fair to state that E.U. money has meant a reduction in the



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A street in Sighisoara seen in a mirror.

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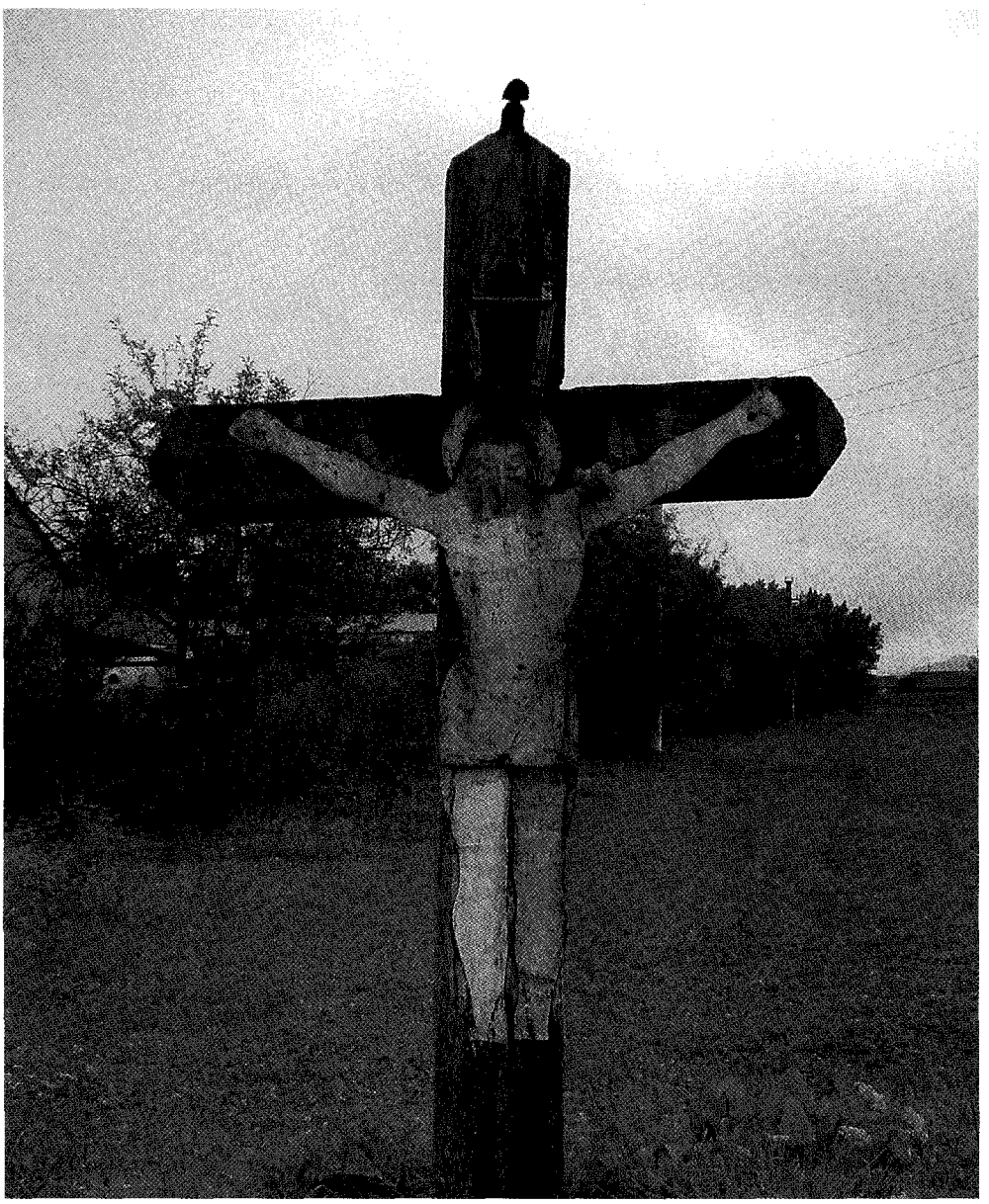

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A wayside shrine near Homorod.

amount of industrial pollution, with further improvements planned.

All too soon, we arrived at Sibiu, which, as Hermannstadt, was the chief town of the Saxons for over 500 years. It is generally considered to be Rumania's most attractive town—perhaps because Ceausescu took no interest in it. Because it was so prosperous, it attracted hostile interest and was sacked by the Tatars in 1241. It accordingly developed strong walls and bastions, some of which have survived, along with streets of handsome houses, the Brukenthal Palace (now Transylvania's best art museum), and the monumental Evangelical Cathedral, where Tepes's son, Mihnea the Bad, is buried. (He was stabbed to death just outside the cathedral in 1510 after having been *voivode* of Wallachia for just three years.) Along the internal nave walls are wonderfully baroque funerary reliefs, where dancing skeletons hold up dead deer and scrolls extolling the departed. Just outside the town is a large open-air museum of vernacular architecture—churches, oratories, wooden and stone cottages, grape presses and olive presses, sluice gates, watermills, windmills, grave markers, fences and high gates, many ornately carved with folk motifs and crucifixes, most of the houses furnished with locally made furniture, some ornamented with Fraktur inscriptions and badly painted eagles, primitive-patterned quilts and rugs, tools, clothes, treen utensils and dishes. Some of these houses could easily be early American—until you step back outside and find yourself facing high wooden gates festooned with ancient abstract patterns, squinting faces, and double-armed crucifixes.

On the last day, I walked from Cisnadie, a town with a fortified church around five miles from Sibiu and called the "Red Town" by the Turks because of the blood they shed attempting to capture it, along breathlessly hot roads lined with orchards to the dome-shaped rock at Cisnadioara. The rock is crowned with the remains of an early-13th-century citadel that had withstood numerous Tatar attacks only to fall prey to depopulation. In an early example of eugenic practices, young men from the village were only allowed to marry if they had first carried a large stone up the steep sides of the hill into the citadel, from where the stones could be pitched down onto the helmets of attackers. Climbing up the track that weaves around the hill, trying to lose the stray dogs that follow anyone who scratches them on the head, with your heart trying to escape through your rib cage, it is easy to understand why the Tatars never quite succeeded. But to stand with your back to the severe chapel and look out from the top of the remaining ramparts down over miles of thick forest, precipitous pastures, and, in the distance, the orchards and spire of Cisnadie makes it worth the effort.

On the way back, I met a trilby-wearing shepherd who gave me maggoty wild apples from the pockets of his waistcoat and smiled shyly as I photographed him against the sylvan backdrop to the deep clonk of the sheep bells, the only sound in the whole sunbathed valley. It was an immemorial scene, emblematic of the whole sequestered province—but one freeze-framed against a looming background of relentless and potentially ruinous change.

Derek Turner is the editor of the Quarterly Review.

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THE COURTS

Supreme Subjectivism and Arbitrary Abortion

by Kenneth Zaretzke

A half-century ago, in *Cooper* v. *Aaron* (1958), the Supreme Court referred to the "basic principle that the federal judiciary is supreme in the exposition of the law of the Constitution" as "settled doctrine" and "a permanent and indispensable feature of our constitutional system." If the Founding Fathers were rolling in their graves in 1958, they must still be pretty restive.

Today, the judiciary possesses extraordinary power. The Supreme Court can use its essentially unaccountable judgment, under the rubric of "individual rights," to force the people to reinvent themselves against their will. The judicial branch has reached the point where its unprecedented power is simply taken for granted. The appellate courts have come to expect the other "co-equal" branches of government to heed their dictates on nearly all constitutional matters, including matters of individual rights about which citizens reasonably disagree. In short, the courts expect us to obey them, however unconvinced we may be of the rightness of their decisions.

Judicial supremacy—the judicial right of preemption, entailing the finality of the judiciary's judgment over that of all other governmental actors, including legislatures—is premised on this expectation of obedience. For at least half a century, in the biggest intragovernmental battle of them all, Congress has routinely wilted in the face of the Supreme Court's increasingly fast and furious cavalry charges. And yet the judicial redefining of individual rights is inherently problematic, especially since the abstractness and generality of those rights makes the attainment of consensus about them difficult or impossible. Citizens disagree about what those rights mean and what can be inferred from them. Does a proper understanding of liberty, for example, really include the right to kill the unborn?

In a sense, the problem is not so much the judicial usurpation of democracy as the judicial usurpation of citizenship. In a republic, the exercise of citizenship is an important responsibility for the members of the whole society, not just for a handful of elites. Without a high degree of civic engagement, the political system cannot help but degenerate. Judicial supremacy is one symptom of this degeneration.

Beyond its ill effects on democracy and citizenship, judicial supremacy is not good for the rule of law. It leads to the twin maladies of subjectivism and arbitrariness.

If the Constitution is what the Supreme Court says it is, then the Constitution has no meaning apart from the Court. In that case, the law is subjective. Subjectivism is the result of regarding the Court's decisions as full-stop authoritative—legally binding (short of amendment) no matter what. I prefer, however, to emphasize arbitrariness.

In hard cases of constitutional law involving basic moral issues—such as abortion, same-sex "marriage," physician-assisted suicide, and (arguably) capital punishment—the chief characteristic of the controversy is that both sides embrace a reasonable point of view, and neither side can conclusively demonstrate that the other side is wrong. Unfortunately, disagreements about morality go more or less "all the way down," which makes judicial settlement of the issue fundamentally arbitrary.

Take the issue of abortion. The two main constitutional facets of the "right" to have an abortion are liberty ("substantive" due process) and equality (equal protection). Pro-lifers insist that liberty doesn't include the right to kill the unborn, and that equality must be understood as a moral relation among all humans rather than as a social relation between men and women. Pro-lifers believe the criterion of moral worth is the possession not of consciousness but of a human identity, which is valuable either because humans are "rational animals" and made in the image of God or because after the point of individuation—*syngamy*—newly existing humans have a "future like ours." (Syngamy marks the end of the roughly 24-hour period of conception when the genetic materials of the sperm and egg become fully fused.) Either way, pro-lifers deny that there is an important moral difference between persons and "mere" humans.

Pro-choicers think there is such a difference. They believe that moral worth is tied up with moral agency, which is dependent on consciousness. For pro-choicers, rights presuppose interests, and creatures without a fairly advanced state of consciousness do not have interests. Accordingly, pro-choicers believe that, since the liberty of women is constitutionally protected, they must be able to end their pregnancies. Pro-choicers also believe that moral equality is too "theological" to be allowed to take precedence over social equality, and that social equality entails that women have a right to end their pregnancies because men have no burden equivalent to pregnancy.

The views of both pro-lifers and pro-choicers contain many complexities that cannot be summarized, much less adequately discussed, in a few short paragraphs. But both sides have a reasonable point of view. Neither side has succeeded in rationally knocking the other side out of contention, because liberty and equality, as constitutional values, do not even come close to speaking conclusively about abortion. Based solely on these abstractions, judicial rulings (in the name of the Constitution) about the permissibility of abortion are ar-

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bitrary. Because of that, they are inevitably unprincipled.

The basic decision about abortion should be left to the legislature. Legislative judgments can be principled simply as compromises in a structured system of rules. Legislators shoulder a lesser burden of proof, with respect to reason and principle, than judges do. This greater burden of rationality gives judges their unique authority, but it also limits the scope of that authority. Judicial authority must be limited in such a way as to avoid moral arbitrariness.

Defenders of judicial supremacy have a shrewd but disingenuous strategy for deflecting criticism. They say that certain rulings are "preconditions of democracy." (Cass Sunstein's eerily Rousseauian formulation is "democracy-forcing.") But what if citizens disagree about what is, or is not, a precondition of democracy? Is legalized abortion a precondition of democracy? Is affirmative action? Same-sex "marriage"? Are these things that citizens must have in order to be full-fledged members of the polity? Most importantly, who is entitled to say when such disagreements are no longer reasonable, or that, regardless of any continuing disagreement, judges may decide for the country what is and is not a precondition of democracy?

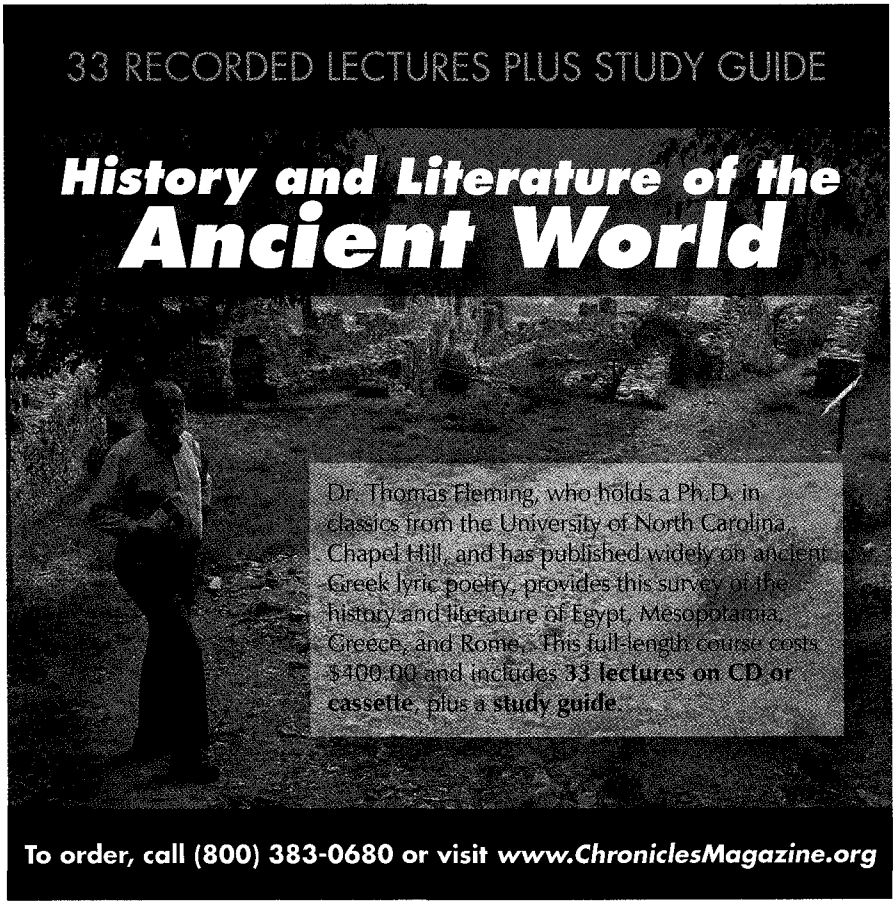
Americans can find their way out of the cave of judicial supremacy by considering the significance of the Preamble to the Constitution. The beginning words of the Constitution are "We the People . . . do ordain and establish . . . " What do these words imply? The subject of the Preamble, "We the People," presupposes that the people possess equality of citizenship; the Preamble rejects the hierarchy in which judges are way up there and everyone else is way down here. The predicate, "ordain and establish," suggests that the people possess political liberty. Pure majoritarianism is ruled out of the political regime in the very first words of the Constitution: No majority can take away the rights of equal citizenship or of political liberty. But pure countermajoritarianism is ruled out as well by virtue of the equality of citizenship. Judges are not privileged citizens, much less supercitizens, in this constitutional democracy.

No constitution could sensibly permit pure countermajoritarianism—the genus to which preemptive judicial authority is a species—for then it would defeat itself. A constitution is a particular social contract for a particular people. It requires consent, however that is understood. Giving consent to the social contract is not possible except to the extent that there is a belief in the equality of citizenship—citizens being those who consent on equal terms to the construction of a framework of law that binds them all. This equality of citizenship, whether it is official or unofficial, whether tacitly recognized or just assumed, flies in the face of the idea of preemptive judicial supremacy. We the People who ordain and establish a constitution could not, even if we wanted to, make our own generation subject to preemptive judicial authority. Much less can we bind future generations to such an order.

A constitution could allow for pure majoritarianism—there is nothing inherently self-defeating about that. But our Constitution does not allow it. In the United States, legislative supremacy has both judicial and political limits. (The judicial limits—embodied in the institution of judicial review—are vulnerable to being undermined by the fact of reasonable disagreement. But the political limits, such as the executive veto, are not similarly vulnerable.)

Judicial supremacy is on a collision course with constitutionalism. Giving a blank check to judges to say exclusively and with finality what the Constitution means is democratically tyrannical, foolish from the standpoint of history (because history testifies to the fact that too much power concentrated in one place tends to corrupt), and fundamentally unsound (because it makes the rule of law arbitrary and subjective). The Constitution is not the private property or secret oracle of a smug smidgen of lawyers who wear black robes.

Kenneth Zaretzke writes from Seattle.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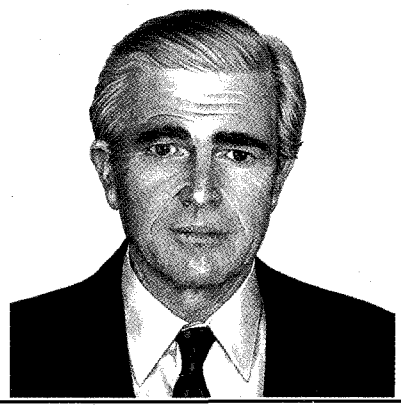
by George McCartney

Wogs



Iron Man
Produced by Marvel Studios
Directed by John Favreau
Screenplay by Mark Fergus and Hawk Ostby
Distributed by Paramount Pictures

The Visitor
Produced by Groundswell Productions
Directed and written by Thomas McCarthy
Distributed by Overture Films

It is always reassuring when a big-budget superhero film fulfills its responsibility to edify the young. *Iron Man*, the latest Marvel comic book to come to life on the big screen, does just that. This movie teaches youngsters that it's righteously cool to kill Middle Easterners by the caravanload.

Iron Man is, in short, a mechanized wog obliterator, if I may borrow Mrs. Clinton's *mot juste* as to what she would like to do to Iran if things got out of order. And we wonder why Middle Easterners hate us. But I'm getting ahead of myself. Let's start at the beginning.

Iron Man is really Tony Stark (Robert Downey, Jr.), an arms manufacturer who never saw a war he didn't like. We first meet him as he skims the Afghan desert in the backseat of a Humvee while sipping a Scotch and joking merrily with the soldiers accompanying him. He is on a mission to assess how well his weapons are slaughtering the local wogs. But the joke's on him. His Humvee is blasted by one of his own weapons stolen by a troop of cave-dwelling Afghan . . . insurgents? Terrorists? It is hard to say. In a futile attempt to avoid offending overseas markets, the film never utters the words *Muslim*, *Islam*, or *Al Qaeda*. Lots of luck.

Stark wakes in a makeshift clinic where Yinsen (Shaun Toub), an Afghan doctor and one of the few good wogs, has installed an electromagnet in the center of his chest. Stark's body has been perforated by shrapnel from one of his own missiles. The metal fragments are intelligent. If they don't kill the victim upon penetration, they gravitate to his heart to do the job later. The gizmo Yinsen has installed deflects their deadly mission. It also works as a handy symbol. Yinsen has given Stark the heart he never had. Before becoming Iron Man, he becomes Tin Man, searching for an Ozian rainbow.

And so the cynical arms manufacturer begins to rethink his callous ways. He learns that the doctor is as much a prisoner as himself and, worse, that the bad Afghans are threatening to kill his family if he doesn't keep Stark alive. They want the "most famous mass murderer in America," as they respectfully address him, to build them one of his ominously named Jericho missiles. It seems they have some more walls to set a-tumble. Under the pretense of following their wishes, the ingenious Stark builds a weaponized metal suit instead to make his escape. Although he fully intends to bring Yinsen with him, the doctor, true to his good wog status, happily plays Gunga Din and sacrifices himself so Stark can blast his way to safety.

Once back in America, a chastened Stark holds a press conference announcing that his company will no longer make weapons but turn to peaceful pursuits. Understandably, his board of directors and second-in-command are thrown into a tizzy and take the company away from him. For reasons not entirely clear to me, Stark repairs to his home lab and, with the help of a robot more solicitous than Luke Skywalker's R2D2, improves upon his original metal suit, transforming it into a gleaming red and gold mannequin reminiscent of Hollywood's Oscar award. This comes in handy when he learns from CNN that the bad wogs have invaded Yinsen's village and are forcing the men to join their campaign. The bald, beardless, and blatantly un-Islamic leader, Raza (Faran Tahir), has monomaniacal ambitions to be the next Genghis Khan, ruling an empire that will extend from Arabia to the Pacific. Stark suits up metallically, blasts off, and swoops down on these nasties, killing them right and left. But, of course, he does so with a precision that guarantees the safety of the innocent. At one point the bad wogs take hold of a group of women and children, using them as shields against the titanium warrior. No problem. Stark simply programs the mini-multi-missile launcher built into his arm and targets them so exactingly that the shells only explode the villains, leaving the innocents they are clutching wholly unscathed. It is a variation on the smart bombs we used to hear about, the ones that only killed the bad wogs and left the good eternally grateful for our intervention. Well, what are comic books for if not dreaming?

I suppose I wouldn't mind all this if it were happening in some comic book never-never land. But this action takes place in present-day Afghanistan where, in pursuit of a just goal, our actual Armed Forces have inadvertently wrought incalculable havoc on innocent people. This is not fantasy land; it is the sorry site of our failure to capture Osama bin Laden and his Al Qaeda forces because of our current administration's infamously wrongheaded decision to wage a larger war in Iraq. To make this the background of a children's fantasy is flatly obscene. Worse, it could con-

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ceivably lead our young to believe in the myth of American omnipotence, setting them up to countenance a future administration's military folly.

Speaking of obscene, why in a children's movie do we need to watch the hero casually bed a brazen babe on the make? Although their coupling is shown in shadow, even an eight-year-old would not mistake it for a friendly wrestling match. Or does the fact that the woman is a feisty reporter who learned to scorn America's Middle Eastern policies at left-wing Brown University justify screwing her?

The Visitor, a film of exquisite charm and poignance directed by Thomas McCarthy, turns the geopolitical tables. Here, the Middle East and Africa invade New York City. This will not surprise anyone who has walked the streets of the city's five boroughs, of course. Nevertheless McCarthy has rendered this invasion with an astonishing intimacy that forces us to rethink our positions on the fraught issue of immigration.

The film begins with the portrait of a wan WASP not living but rather existing in suburban Connecticut. So wan is Walter Vale (Richard Jenkins) that we don't even see him at first as McCarthy's camera glides about the empty rooms of his chaste and chilly home. Then the doorbell rings, breaking the genteel hush, and, finally, Walter appears, a bespectacled man in his early 60's who would seem inoffensively mild were it not for his perpetually guarded expression. In glancing asides, we slowly learn that he is a widower who has not yet come to terms with the loss of his wife, a concert pianist. As if to sustain her presence, he has embarked upon piano lessons for himself, but it's going dismally. His instructor tries to console him. "Learning an instrument at your age is difficult, especially if you don't possess a natural gift for it," she says, in an entirely misconceived attempt at kindness. Walter merely stares at her wordlessly through his black-rimmed glasses. He is trying to reconnect to the lost rhythm of his former life, only to suffer this fatuous consolation.

More than piano lessons, Walter needs to be shaken from his soul-destroying depression. On cue, the shaking begins the next day. Teaching global economics at a Connecticut university, Walter has allowed himself to become that most useless of things, an uninterested and uninteresting professor. He hasn't prepared a class for years, nor has he written much of anything since publishing the four books that established him earlier in his career. When his chairman asks him to give a talk at a New York University conference on global economics, he reluctantly agrees and takes himself to his Greenwich Village apartment located near the school. Upon entering the apartment, he discovers he has unexpected visitors. He hasn't been there in some time, and in his absence a young couple have taken up residence. After a few fearful moments on both sides, Walter and his uninvited guests figure out what has happened. The couple were misled to believe they were subletting from a "friend." Both are illegal aliens who have fled their home countries—Tarek (Haaz Sleiman) from Syria; his girlfriend, Zainab (Danai Gurira), from Senegal. They apologize, and Tarek offers to pay for their tenancy; Walter declines. They quickly pack their few things and leave. When Walter discovers them on the street a little later, desperately phoning their friends to find quarters for the night, he takes pity and invites them back into his apartment, saying they can stay until they find something else that suits them.

While they share the apartment, Walter becomes fascinated by Tarek's talent on the djembe, a West African drum he plays professionally in various jazz clubs. Tarek offers to teach Walter how to play, and, with some coaxing, the reserved academic agrees. Things go fitfully at first, but this doesn't deter Tarek. He's a natural enthusiast and keeps encouraging Walter. "Walter," he says, "I know you're a very smart man, but with a drum you have to remember not to think. Thinking just screws it up." This is Walter's breakthrough. Soon after, he is joining Tarek, drumming in Central Park with other enthusiasts, often the only white guy in the group and certainly the only 60-year-old wearing a tie and sport jacket under a nylon windbreaker. I am usually not a fan of the don't-think-just-be philosophy, but seeing the joy that overtakes Walter's face in these sessions, I found it impossible not to respond to the life-affirming energy invading his long-stifled existence. Tarek's trespass has colonized him with unexpected joy. Jenkins is marvelous in these scenes. He manages to convey both Walter's awkwardness as a reserved, isolated intellectual and his growing exuberance as a man rediscovering his life's rhythm.

This is one aspect of Walter's return to life. There is another, however, and it has none of drumming's appeal. When immigration authorities discover Tarek's illegal status, they clap him in a detention center, a grim cement block of a building. Uncharacteristically, Walter wastes no time. He hires an immigration lawyer in an attempt to extricate Tarek from the Byzantine toils of INS regulations. He also sees to the needs of Tarek's mother, who flies in from Michigan to help her son. Eventually, he even takes a leave of absence from his university to support Tarek. In short, he wrenches himself out of his guarded insularity, trying to shout down fate itself. It is his belated assertion that he is still alive.

It is tempting to dismiss this film for being foolishly sentimental about illegal immigration. But that's too easy. McCarthy is not arguing ideology. He is on the side of individual humans. He recognizes that we are all visitors here, calling hopefully to one another across the borders that separate us, banking on what we share despite our differences. ◁

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Mexico Way

A NOVEL BY

Chilton Williamson, Jr.

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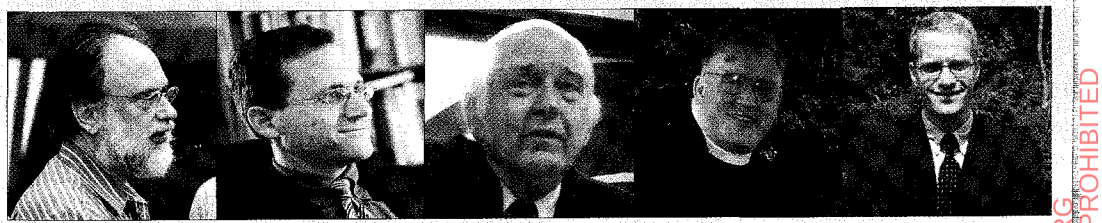

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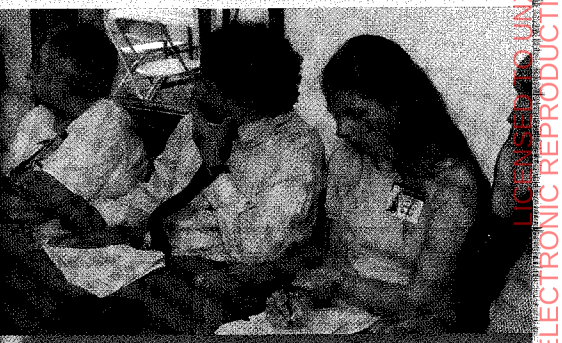

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